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STARBURST

TM

STEPHEN KING ON FILM
FIRESTARTER
AND
CHILDREN
OF THE
CORN
IN COLOUR

WE INTERVIEW
DEBRA HILL
PRODUCER OF
THE
DEAD ZONE

SEE THE HIGH ADVENTURE FILM
ROMANCING THE STONE
AT OUR FREE PREVIEW SCREENING



MARVEL

PLUS: WE INTERROGATE THE
EMPEROR OF THE
UNIVERSE



Volume 6, Number 12
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Opinion

It's with some relief that I can report that the "Evil Dead" trial at Leeds Crown Court has ended with the acquittal of the defendant, Barkers Video Tape Centre. Barkers was accused of purveying obscene material, to wit, video copies of *The Evil Dead*, *The Burning*, *Night of the Demon*, *Cannibal Apocalypse*, *Bloody Moon*, *Living Dead*, *Nightmares in a Damaged Brain*, *Beast in Heat*, *Zombie Flesheaters* and *The Slayer*.

Now this has to be good news for any horror film aficionado as it means a likely end to the wildcat actions of the police in persecuting so-called nasties which bear British Board of Film Censor Certificates.

And as a coda to the story, *Video Week*, the trade journal of the Video Industry, noted that Barkers Video Tape Centre numbers 75 police officers among its members. Wonder how many of them have hired *The Evil Dead*. And if so, did they enjoy it? I think I'd rather not know.

CHAUVINISTS' CORNER

And now, with the indulgence of Starburst's female readers, I'd like to address the chauvinists among you out there. We have been receiving many requests over the last few months for another *Fantasy Female* round-up, ostensibly to bring readers up to date, but more likely so that students of the female form can spend a couple of hours swatting up on their favourite subject. And as regular followers of this magazine have no doubt noticed, we've been steering clear of the topic since our last (un)coverage in *Starburst 56*. Where does the time go?

Now, we at Starburst, ever eager to pander to the baser instincts of readers and editorial staff alike, would love to put together a feature on the top Fantasy heroines of the last 16 months.

Except... where have all the glam actresses gone? Since Starburst favourite Caroline Munro quit the low budget fantasy film business and went legit (is hostessing 3-2-1 legit?), there's been a dearth of my kind of genre actresses. That's not to say that the last year-and-a-half has been a complete loss... *Inferno*'s Ania Peroni turned up as the first victim in Argento's *Tenebrae* and former exploitation queen Pam Grier lived up an otherwise dull *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. And if you're prepared to accept borderline genre fare I could mention Barbara Carrera's spirited performance in *Never Say Never Again*. But after that, it starts to get harder to think of names.



But all is not lost. In a future issue of Starburst (around 75 or so) we'll be printing an interview with Laurene Landen, who made such an impression in 1982's *I, The Jury*. Her latest film, *Hundra*, was a surprise hit at last year's Cannes Film Festival, despite the fact that the concept of the lead character owed something to Marvel's *Red Sonja*. Watch out for it.

Then, we have high hopes for Tanya Roberts' newie, *Sheena*. Based on the Fiction House comic book of the 1940's, the movie is sub-titled "The Queen of the Jungle" and advance publicity shows Ms Roberts kneeling, fingernails imbedded in her own thighs, toggled up in a chamois swimsuit. Impressive!

But not exactly a glut, you'll agree.

A sad state of affairs when Fantasy Heroines, long a staple of the genre seem to be "out" for the duration.

Now if you'll excuse me, I have to dig a trench in which to shelter from the barrage of Feminist hate mail that'll pour into the office in the wake of this column.

Alan McKenzie

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CRY UNCLE!

Having been an avid reader of your magazine since issue 1, I find it not only a useful guide to the world of fantasy, but a very good read and well worth the money.

However, I have just one complaint: How about something on *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*? I know I speak for all members of the UNCLE HQ (which has now, sadly, closed in Britain) when I say that a feature on the show is long overdue.

Channel D, out.

John Hadlow,
Exmouth,
Devon.

You're right, of course, John. We never have printed a feature on the best of the Sixties spy shows. It's certainly one of the editor's favourites. . . tell you what, we'll try to dig up a batch of pictures from the show. Then all we have to do is to persuade Richard Holliss (he of the square eyes) to write his heart out . . .

AMERICAN ALTERNATIVE?

I have a small confession to make. While waiting for the May issue of *Starburst* to drop through my letter box, I found I could wait no longer and went down to the newsagent for a quick peek. While down there I came across another magazine called *Fantastic Films*. On the cover was a picture of a bruised and battered Harrison Ford in his famous Indiana Jones role, and inside was a sneak preview of *The Temple of Doom*.

Seeing all this, I wrongly thought I had found a better fantasy mag. I couldn't believe a second-rate magazine had beaten you to a report like that.

P.C.
Erith,
Kent.

Truth to tell, P.C. it's not a case of anybody beating anybody. It's merely that major movies frequently open in America weeks, or even months, ahead of the British opening date. And under normal circumstances, the film companies prefer that magazines report on new movies as close to the open date as possible. Sometimes, we arrange to publish special previews of movies far in advance of their release. We reported on *Krull* about a year before it opened and we covered *The Keep* way before the film appeared in the cinemas (has it been released yet?) And in next month's *Starburst*, we'll be reporting on the special effects of *Company of Wolves*, a British horror movie directed by Neil Jordan with werewolf transformations by Christopher Tucker, the man who did the makeup for *The Elephant Man* and *Quest for Fire*.

But our policy is to go by the British opening dates. After all, *Starburst* is a

Starburst LETTERS

Send all your comments and criticisms to:
**Starburst Letters, Starburst Magazine,
Marvel Comics Ltd., 23 Redan Place,
London W2 4SA, United Kingdom.**



Above: A gripping scene at the thrilling climax of Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom. Below: A mechanical transformation effect by Christopher Tucker for *Company of Wolves*. We will be running a full-colour feature on this new British horror fable next issue.



British magazine for British readers. We're not in business to compete with the handful of US magazines which are imported by small distribution companies. We're sure you can see our point.

KING MOVIES

Whilst I agree with some of the points raised in Jon Towilson's letter (*Starburst Letters*, *Starburst* 70), for instance, the many flaws in the film of *Christine* lying in the script, I feel that he has missed the point of both the book and the film.

King's book is intended as a tongue-in-cheek look at the American boy-meets-car saga. The fact that there is so much humour in the book dispels the horror to an extent. For me, the suspense was created by King dropping hints as to what would happen to the main characters, and the fact that he had created characters that were believable and I cared about.

Although Carpenter and script writer Bill Phillips may not have captured the content of the book, they certainly captured the feel of the book, which was for me more important.

On top of this, the film contained some stunning imagery. Two examples particularly came to mind – that of Christine aflame and the scene from the final confrontation in which Christine's bonnet is torn open to resemble a set of demonic teeth.

This film convinced me that Carpenter is the best director working in the fantasy genre today.

I also feel it necessary to say a few words in defence of *The Dead Zone* film in the light of Phil Edwards' rather negative review. Christopher Walken gave a superb performance as Johnny Smith, making the role as convincing as the character in the book, and thus gaining my sympathy, an important factor if the film is going to work. Furthermore, the fact only one gruesome scene existed made it all the more terrifying (and perhaps the lack of such blood and guts will dispel the idea of Cronenberg as a moronic gorehound to the Barry Normans of the world). The White Castle Rock episode in the film kept me on tenterhooks – more so than in the book.

Whilst Messrs Towilson and Edwards are entitled to their opinions, I feel it a pity that they didn't get as much from these films as I did.

Simon Smith,
Moseley,
Birmingham.

Many thanks for your thoughts, Simon. And as if by magic, the next letter is from the very same Jon Towilson mentioned in your letter . . .

SUBJECTIVE P.O.V.

Regarding the eternal debate over (video) censorship, I feel I have to correct a popular misconception which

up to now seems indisputed. That is, the identification "tendency" involved with the use of subjective camerawork.

As in Ian Covell's comment, **Starburst 66**: "... you are one with the killer", the misconception is that P.O.V. camerawork invokes identification with the character that it represents.

According to film theory, the subjective camera is the negation of subjective cinema, i.e. when a camera replaces an actor, he cannot be identified with. Up to a point, an audience identifies with the character who is most often on the screen.

If we were to take the murder scenes from a horror film and view them as individual entities, (a practice which, as you all know has happened) we should, in theory, ultimately identify with the victim rather than with the murderer (as she is the one who actually appears on the screen).

Don't take my word for it. Watch the opening of *Halloween*. See what you think. Because the crux of my letter is this: certain arguments that have appeared in the censorship debate not only have little factual grounding, but actually clash with accepted Film and Psychology values.

For example, the arguments used in the "deprave and corrupt" issue are completely false after consideration of the basic childhood "imitation" theory (cf A. Bandura, if you wish to investigate for yourselves).

Both this and the subjective camera issue are serious allegations. They should be treated with scepticism.

Jon Towson,
Grantham,
Lincs.

A valid point. Now why didn't John Brosnan think of that...?

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

After reading the column *Book World* by Chris Charles (**Starburst 67**), he reviewed a book called *The Amtrak Wars*. According to the names he mentioned, there was something familiar about them. The names Motorhead and Shakatak are both names of pop

groups. Those who are not familiar with the music business may like to know that the other name Mo-town is a name of a recording company! You better watch out for these new names, some of them are from pop groups with unusual names.

Vilmore Rochester,
Peckham,
London.



NOW READ THE BOOK

In **Starburst 70** you mentioned in the *Starburst Data Bank* that *The Harrison Ford Story* by Alan MacKenzie is going to be published soon. I'd be grateful if you could give me some information on it, such as when it's coming out, how much it will be and anything else about it.

Meanwhile, I'm eagerly awaiting **Starburst 71**: at a girl's boarding school you need something to cheer you up. **Starburst** does it excellently!

Anelisa Mills,
Newbury,
Berks.

Alan MacKenzie replies: "Thanks for your interest in the book, Anelisa (did I spell that right?). The *Harrison Ford Story* was published on 18th May '84 by Zomba Books, priced £4.95. It covers the making of all the Ford movies from his first, *Dead Heat* on a Merry-go-Round right up to *Indiana Jones* and the Temple of Doom. It's packed with great pictures and I really think you should rush out right now and buy a copy... please?"

ERROR!

Tony Crawley should be thrown into a Total Perspective Vortex and forgotten about. That can be the only punishment for his errors under the title *Trek of the Month*, in *Things to Come*, **Starburst 70**. It is bad enough when he claims that the number of *Star Trek* episodes produced is 78. But if the final episode was called *Turnabout Murdër*, I'm a Denebian Slime Devil. I suggest Mr Crawley purchases *Rafe Needleman's Star Trek Trivia Book*, which lists all 79 episodes, *Turnabout Intruder*, et al.

Now I've got that out of my system, I have a question for **Starburst** readers: What do *THX 1138* and *Dark Star* have in common? Answer: They both started life as amateur films. Before I continue, I should state that I have made a couple of low (and I mean low!) budget SF/Horror films, but there are many more people like me. **Starburst** concentrates on just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to films; many SF and Horror films are made by amateurs, so why not feature them?

Come on **Starburst**, don't ignore us amateurs. After all, we are the Spielbergs and Carpenters of the future.

Stephen Elsdon,
Broxbourne,
Herts.

Tony C. has been sentenced to ten years in a Klingon forced labour camp. After all, **Starburst** published a complete guide to *Star Trek* way back in our very first issue.

As for amateur film-makers... to be honest, not only do we not get to see

much in the way of amateur films, but the chances of such a film turning out to be a masterpiece are pretty slim. But if readers, ever get to hear of an amateur film that is worth covering, we want to hear about it.

INDEX DEMAND

Come on, you guys. Look, I know that every **Starburst** reader has a brain the size of a planet, but with over 70 issues in our files, it's getting kinda hard to remember where everything is. I mean, when you've spent twenty unsuccessful minutes flipping through, trying to find that review of "I Was a Teenage Brosnan" you know is in there somewhere, you begin to wonder if it's really worth it. So please can we have an index.

You mentioned Summer/Winter specials. You could combine both ideas. A special index issue!

All those in favour say Aye!

M.D. Hurst,
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear.

RETURN MATCH

Well done on your feature about *The Avengers*.

Please please please do one about *The New Avengers*.

Mark Edwards,
Dagenham,
Essex.

We will cover *The New Avengers* some time in the not too distant future, Mark. Stick with us... okay?



Revenge of FLICKERS by Tim Quinn & Dicky Howett

THIS MONTH WE CAST AN EYE OVER THE 'PERSONAL' COLUMN OF **VARIETY**, THE FILM WORLD'S MOST POPULAR PERIODICAL...



<p>PERSONAL</p> <p>New James Bond read Suit active premier. Apply P.O. Box 007.</p> <p>Learn to act the Reel! Wild way S.A.E. to Gerry Anderson Productions. More Much More.</p> <p>Cubby. Even More S. Connors.</p> <p>Money to burn. Apply G. Lucas.</p> <p>Genuine Superman surgical truss. Apply Crittaph. Keele. P.O. Box 100.</p>	<p>Biggest dealer leather and furs. Apply H. Ford. Lots of wipers.</p> <p>"Millionaire"? Need to make a tax loss? Then beck the next Diane Re. Horrendous production. New Delhi.</p> <p>Gandi! Lookalike seeks work. 25,000 sheets for sale. R. Arterborough.</p> <p>Used once. Contact 25,000 Ocean for sale. Make suitable door. Zeddie A.</p> <p>E.T. lookalike seek. Contact P.O. Box 100.</p>
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Opening Hubbard's Cupboard

Enter: a different form of sf. Scientology fiction...

I don't quite know how he got in touch with the guy, reclusively hidden away as he is (depending on the stories) on a yacht in the Caribbean/a Provence chateau in France/South American rain forests/ Antarctic ice station, but American producer Bill Immerman has bought L. Ron Hubbard's huge sf novel, *Battlefield Earth*—and intends to make two films from it.

Hubbard, to those knowing his worth as a pretty decent sf craftsman only, also happens to be the head of the controversial Church of Scientology and perhaps the less said about that side of him the better. Scientology is not quite as bad as the Moonies, but as Hubbard leaves his religion and its Dianetics out of his sf books, perhaps I should leave it out here before I lose my head and drop us all into a libel action...

British director Ken Annakin has been selected by Immerman's Salem Productions to make the films—two as one in the *Superman III* style, but for around \$20 million each. Sites in Denver, Colorado, have been chosen to represent Hubbard's view of mother earth in the year 3000 as the few surviving humans (not a Scientologist among 'em) have to wage war with a task-force of not quite Spielbergian ETs.

Richard Edlund, a *Jedi* Oscar-winner in April with his ILM crew, will handle the effects with his new team from Doug Trumbull's Entertainment Effects Group (EEG if you're into initials). Annakin, however, wants more than Edlund can cope with, so he's also talking to George Lucas' ILM boys to provide extra SPFX.

Now all of that sounds fine. Well, good enough... Ken Annakin may not have a film in our Fantasy Chart—not since I dropped the Disney entries. He's worked a lot for the Disney studio over here: *Robin Hood* (1952), *The Sword and The Rose* (1953), *Third Man on the Mountain* (1959), *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1960). He's tackled other big, effects-pieces like *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines* (1965), *Battle of the Bulge* (1965), *Monte Carlo or Bust* (1969), and was responsible for the British sections of *The Longest Day* (1962).

Also (very) much in his favour, Ken Annakin was the first director to notice Julie Christie in Fred Hoyle's *A For Andromeda* and put her into movies in the 60s. So he can't be all bad!

Against him: okay, so he did direct the films about The Huggerts in the '40s—we all have to start somewhere and they were winners!—and his last outing was down under's *Pirate Movie*. Yes, well, times is hard all over...

Annakin, I can live with.

Tony Crawley's THINGS TO COME



Above: Coming your way this summer is *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*. Here Admiral James T. Kirk (William Shatner) keeps a lookout from the bridge of the U.S.S. Enterprise for his old Vulcan buddy. Below: Abraham Polonsky (right) on the set of *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here* (1970). He is currently working on *Battlefield Earth*.



Polonsky—Not Polanski

I'm just not so sure about the scripter

Don't get me wrong. I have as much respect for Abraham Polonsky as anyone has, knowing the bright and bitter truth of his career. Oscar-nominated for his second script, *Body and Soul* with John Garfield in 1947, he made a stunning directing debut with Garfield's next, *Force of Evil* (1948), dismissed at the time as a B-gangster flick until acknowledged as a remarkable American classic—a savage indictment of the American materialist dream.

And then? And then nothing but all that McCarthy malarkey, the deep Hollywood shame of the blacklist, living the life of Woody Allen's *The Front* for real (actually doing quite well out of it), never allowed to use his own name on a scenario again until producer Jennings Lang bravely signed him for Don Siegel's *Madigan* in 1968, and never being allowed to direct again until Lang, again, gave him Redford's *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here*... twenty-two years after his debut!

Losey, Forman and most of the others blighted by the Communist witch-hunts had it easy compared with Polonsky. They started anew in Britain. Polonsky, a New York lawyer, college prof and OSS man in the war turned novelist and film-maker, stayed home, eventually told the story of McCarthy's Un-American Activities Committee like it was in a searing novel, *The Season of Fear*, and simply waited until he could stop pseudonymous fronting and become himself again; officially.

So, yes, of course, I have a lot of time for such a wronged talent as Abraham Polonsky's. But considering his last script was *Monsignor* and that *The Undefeated One* will be 74 in December, well, you'll appreciate my reservations. As I sit here and count my own grey hairs (counting the brown ones is quicker), I know age is no barrier to success—look at *Casablanca* writer Julius J. Epstein, still going strong and Oscar-nominated in April for Tom Conti's wonderful *Reuben, Reuben* film, at age 74—but that wasn't sf. If age is no barrier, a writer's style can be and I wonder if Polonsky is up to today's kind of fantasy movie requirements.

Abe has no reservations at all—and will, hopefully, prove me wrong. He's certainly going about *Battlefield Earth* in the correct manner. He's working daily with Ken Annakin on the book and how best to solve the problems—and logistics—and finances—of tackling such a huge tome in even two movies. And that approach, as William Goldman underlines in his *Adventures in the Screen Trade* book, is exactly how writers and directors should work and hardly ever do.

Polonsky says Hubbard's book is a marvellous adventure with certain similarities with the *Star Wars* tales—

except "it has a point of view, it's about problems of today that are projected into the future."

To be cont'd, I'm sure...

What's that? Oh no, no, no, none of the film team are Scientologists. In fact, neither Immerman, Annakin or Polonsky has ever met Ron Hubbard. Then again, who has...?

Wizards of Oz

Little Dorothy is now alone on the yellowbrick road... "Creative consultation," is how they called it, euphemistically. The raw truth behind that statement from Gary Kurtz' trouble-ridden *Oz* sets at Elstree is that Coppola and Lucas' Oscar-awarded sound man, Walter Murch, was close to allowing his hard-earned directing debut to get away from him — until his pals, the movie brats, flew smartly to his rescue.

The Disney folk, already thinking about shuttering *Oz* due to high costs a matter of weeks before shooting began in February — and since riddled with take-over rumours in California — were less than delighted with Murch's first days' work. Exit: his cameraman, Freddie Francis (a director in his own right, of course) and assistant director Ray Corbett. Enter: their replacements: David Watkin and Michael Murray. Murch himself loomed large as the next target.

Then came the visitation from the magi. These "visits," as they were called, to Elstree, first by George Lucas, then Francis Coppola — and the last I heard, Steven Spielberg was winging in — were not so much Hi there, Walt, howya' doin' visits at all. Nor consultations, either. The friends from upon high trooped along to help direct some scenes, lower the pressure on Murch and really help the guy over the immense hurdle of directing what is, anyway, one incredibly complicated movie where every other actor is strictly mechanical and doesn't hear Action! or Cut! — even if it feels like working in the first place!

Good to hear that the big guys — brats no longer — are still able to drop everything and help out a mate. Sure, they always used to do this. I mean, hell, that's what friends are for, right? But that was back in the days when they were merely millionaires and not trillionsaires with all the ego problems that entails.

Given the sheer wealth of these visits, Disney has agreed to let Murch get on with what he's been planning for the last few years — make the damn film. Good luck to him. And all who sail with him!

2010 Visit

So far, Prince Andrew has been the only outsider allowed into the secrets of 2010 at MGM Studios. During his recent Hollywood trip HRH was given a right royal look-see around Peter Hyams' set. He met some of the cast



The publicity artwork for *The Last Starfighter* starring Lance Guest. (We have an exclusive interview with the film's director, Nick Castle, next issue.)

and got to see some shooting — and, I understand, some of the backroom effects work, as well. Maybe we should write to Buck House and ask for his exclusive report...

Latest news I have on the movie is that it's matching Arthur C. Clarke's 2001 sequel novel very well in becoming a combined USA-USSR trip — which takes place, after all, on the good Soviet spacecraft, Leonov, en route to Jupiter. Now set to music by Tony Banks.

The Americans are Roy Scheider, John Lithgow and Bob Balaban. The Russians, all expatriates now living in L.A., are headed by a much-decorated Muscovite actor Saveliy Kramarov and rock 'n' roll singer, Natasha Schneider, plus Oleg Rudnik, Vladimir Shomarovsky, Elya Baskin, Victor Steinback and Jan Triska, all of whom, I'm sure, are much relieved to be in space suits and far from their usual Film City roles of ill-dressed KGB agents and the like.

Still representing Britain on the Jupiter mission — Helen Mirren. Ahhh! That's always been a dream of mine. To go into outer space with just Helen Mirren for company. Or Rosanna Arquette. Or Valerie Kaprisky. Or Daryl Hannah. Or...

Starfrighting Man

I've heard it called *Tron* — *The Special Edition*... but you never know *The*

Last Starfighter might work. Difficult to say now as producer Gary Adelson and his director, Carpenter-mate Nick Castle, are keeping their secrets locked up and will say little about the movie. "The computer graphics for this film have 7½ times greater resolution than seen before," comments Gary. Then he butters his lip.

Lance Guest, from *Halloween II*, has the title role, with Catherine Mary Stewart as his adoring girlfriend, Dan O'Herlihy hidden beneath alien prosthetics and Robert Preston as Centauri, the guy with the car-space-ship who drops our hero right in it. In what? A lot of inter-galactic battles, courtesy John Whitney Jr and Gary Demos' Digital Productions SPFX, that's what. These guys talk... a little. Their high-resolution computa-graphics were accomplished with their Digital Computer Scene Simulation process, plugged into a \$6.5 million CRAY IS/100 computer.

Any the wiser? No, neither am I.

Oscar Lowdown

Fantasy wasn't so hot for once on Oscar night. Final score: *Terms of Endearment* 5, *Fanny and Alexander* 4. *The Right Stuff* collected four Oscars as well (beating *Return of the Jedi* in most categories) and I tend to put Phil Kaufman's movie in our bag. In particular for those scenes where he linked a wise old aboriginal's campfire

sparks with the, er, "fireflies" seen by John Glenn during America's first orbits of the earth.

The very word, aboriginal, does not even appear in Tom Wolfe's book where, far from mystical, the fireflies were later explained by Scott Carpenter's flight when he hit the side of his capsule and sparking particles appeared outside his window. "Whatever they were," wrote Wolfe, "they were attached to the hull of his capsule and no doubt emanated from or were created by the capsule and not some sort of micro-galaxy."

Kaufman simply added one and one — Glenn up there while Gordo Cooper was his radio-link in Australia — and made it five. Pure fantasy. So, for that matter, was the ridiculous idea that any US vice-president, even one as crass as LBJ, would actually get on stage to introduce an act by fan-dancing nude Sally Rand. Oh, the huge Houston barbecue was true enough, but LBJ just wasn't there. So yea, verily, a fantasy film... about fact.

And didn't it do well — better on Oscar night than at the box-office, in fact. Though I don't see why. Super movie! Then again, I'm an old NASA nut.

The main Oscars went where expected. Robert Duvall, *THX-1138* himself, had to be Best Actor when he was up against four Britons. But you know all this. You've read, seen or snoozed through it. Good to see Linda Hunt winning Supporting Actress for playing a guy opposite Mel Gibson in *The Year of Living Dangerously*, even if this mean Steven Spielberg went home empty-handed again. He'd gone along with his twotwogether-again girl, Amy Irving, nominated for supporting *Yentl*, you see. She lost and we'll be seeing Linda again shortly in *Dune*, by the way.

The *WarGames* pair were knocked out of original script recognition by Duvall's *Tender Mercies* mate, Horton Foote (ironically, while Matthew Broderick was making Foote's latest semi-autobiographical script, *1918* in Texas); and their (and often *Spill*) camerage Billy Fraker and *Right Stuff*'s Caleb Deschanel naturally didn't stand much of a chance against the best eye in the biz, Bergman's Sven Nykvist. (Ingmar Bergman, himself, has never won an Oscar and now that he's quit movies, never will. So Spielberg shouldn't feel so bad. His day is yet bound to come.)

From then on, *The Right Stuff* proved its title in the technical divisions. Kaufman's five editors beat, among others, *The Blue Thunder* duo, though I reckoned the *Flashdancers* had a chance, the way they cut from Jennifer Beales to Marjane Jahar without us knowing for months.

Bill Conti's rousing score for Kaufman beat John Williams for *Jedi*. Same 'thing in Sound Effects Editing where Lucasfilm's Ben Burtt, who already has

And so the Stephen King blandwagon rolls on. *Firestarter* was perhaps the most filmable of all of King's books. However, this movie version turns out to be the most mediocre adaptation so far.

Sporting the starriest cast yet assembled for one of the novelist's pictures, it certainly isn't the actors' fault, although Freddie Jones and George C. Scott do tie in first place for teetering too close to the ludicrous. If anything, *Firestarter* makes the most faithful transference from page to screen. And this is the problem. It is so much easier to accept gaping holes in a plot on the printed page. In the context of cinema, it isn't.

Drew Barrymore plays the lead as the girl born with the "gift" of pyrokinesis, on the run with her father from a splinter group of the U.S. Intelligence who want to study her unique talent for making people and objects explode in flames by just giving them a concentrated stare. It is the earlier parts of *Firestarter* that work the best. The setting up of the basic premise told in flashback is interesting and full of promise. So it doesn't matter that Barrymore's precognition ability comes and goes for the sake of contrivance. It's when the two sorry characters are separately imprisoned in secret headquarters that the film screeches to a halt and sheer boredom intensifies every flaw. After half an hour of this any ending at all would turn out to be a godsend! But *Firestarter* at least does close explosively with some fine pyrotechnic stuntwork — although even this is blunted somewhat by special effects wires being on display in practically every shot.

After the superb *Class of 1984*, director Mark Lester has gone the predictable route of being phased by name actors and a big budget, when in his exploitation career neither factor existed. Without Dino De Laurentiis, no stars and a tight budget, *Firestarter* would have been a better, and gutsier, film.

I've saved the worst till last, though. Tangerine Dream's score is so inappropriate and out of context that it damages any vague suspense *Firestarter* manages to muster beyond repair. Notice I say suspense, because the producers of this film have gone to great lengths to stress that it isn't a horror movie. Who am I to argue?

More than any other Stephen King, I² had high hopes for *Firestarter*. But the spark of enthusiasm is soon extinguished by this very damp squib.

Starring: David Keith (as Andy McGee), Drew Barrymore (Charlie McGee), Freddie Jones (Dr. Joseph Wantless), Heather Locklear (Vicky McGee), Martin Sheen (Capt. Hollister), George C. Scott (John Rainbird), Art Carney (Irv Manders), Louise Fletcher (Norma Manders), Moses Gunn (Dr. Pynchot). Directed by Mark L. Lester. Screenplay by Stanley Mann. Photographed by Giuseppe Ruzzolini. Edited by David Rawlins. Produced by Frank Capra Jr.
Time: 115 mins. Cert: 18

FIRESTARTER



ABOVE: The devastating results of Charlie McGee's incredible power scatter the Secret Service men surrounding Irv Manders' remote farm. Top right: The villains of the piece: George C. Scott plays John Rainbird, the death-obsessed assassin who believes Charlie to be the instrument of his own destruction, and Martin Sheen (in his second King film this year) as the calculating Captain Hollister who sees Charlie as a living weapon of staggering power. Right: Charlie McGee (Drew Barrymore) finds herself at the centre of a Secret Service power struggle and is forced to kill in order to survive. Far right: The deranged John Rainbird aims his gun at Charlie in an effort to force her into murder.

PORTER

*A Starburst Film Review
by Alan Jones*



BOND IN BERLIN



John Brosnan, Starburst's off-licensed trouble-shooter, has smuggled back this report on the 2nd German James Bond Festival from Berlin. . .

I will wear a grey overcoat and have blond hair," wrote my host Marc Hertling so that I would know him when I arrived at the Berlin-Zoo railway station. This didn't seem sufficient information to me as surely there would be more than one German male with blond hair and a grey overcoat on a busy Berlin railway station. I had visions of myself accosting a whole multitude of blond-haired men and asking them if they were fans of James Bond. Who knows what embarrassing situations might result?

Of course, it would have been more appropriate if we'd used the recognition code in *From Russia With Love* – the one that Red Grant uses on the station to fool Bond ("Do you have a match?" "I use a lighter myself." "Better still." "Until they go wrong."). Then again I might have ended up with a year's supply of matches before I found the right person.

What I did do was send Herr Hertling a description of myself as I guessed that an aging hippy-type who walks with a pronounced Australian accent would be fairly conspicuous on a Berlin station. And I was correct – my host located me without any difficulty shortly after I'd arrived, dead on time, on the 7.07 train, still dazed from the long journey through Holland and both West and East Germany.

Marc turned out to be surprisingly young to be in charge of a Festival that had arranged to bring guests from all over the world. But though only 19 he proved to be an adroit organiser and diplomat, and demonstrated an entrepreneurial flair that prompted one of the guests to later remark that he would soon be a film producer.

Over breakfast at the Steinberger Hotel, the venue for the event, Marc told me that last year's star guest had been George Lazenby. I was relieved he wasn't a guest this year as I'd written some rather unkind things about him in my book, *James Bond in the Cinema* (particularly in the second edition). But then Marc informed me that Christopher Wood, who worked on the scripts of *The Spy Who Loved Me* and *Moonraker*, was coming and I hadn't been too kind about him either, describing him as a "former writer of tawdry sex comedies."



I could only hope that Wood had never encountered a copy of my book. It was actually unlikely that he would have seeing that pressure from Cubby Broccoli had prevented the publication of the 2nd edition in the UK (Bond completists who have yet to acquire a copy of this marvellous volume might be interested to know that the Forbidden Planet bookshop at 58 St. Giles High Street, London WC2, sometimes has imported copies from America).

Nevertheless it was with some trepidation that I went down to the bar that evening to meet the other guests. Sitting with Marc when I got there was Peter Hunt, editor and second-unit director on the early, and best, Bonds, and director of the great but fatally flawed *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (the fatal flaw was, of course, Lazenby). More recently Hunt has made the underrated *Death Hunt* (with Lee Marvin and Charles Bronson) and various TV series including *Marlowe* and the forthcoming to remake of *The Last Days at Pompeii*.

Marc introduced me to Hunt but didn't explain my reason for being at the Festival, which I didn't mind because I couldn't remember what I'd said about Hunt in the book. The same applied to Guy Hamilton who arrived shortly afterwards. Now Mr Hamilton directed what I regard as the best Bond, *Goldfinger*, but he also made *The Man With the Golden Gun* and I may have been less than kind to him in print because of the latter.

Then Lois Maxwell arrived and I was fairly positive I hadn't written anything bad about her. The charming Ms Maxwell is, of course, best known as Miss Moneypenny, M's secretary in the Bonds, a role she's played since the series began in 1962 ("It ruined my career," she told me cheerfully later).

And I was positive I'd never ever said anything nasty about Saskia Cohen Tanugi, mainly because I couldn't remember, at first, even seeing her in *Never Say Never Again*. Later Marc refreshed my memory about her, pointing out that she'd played Bond's helper, Nicole, who met him at the airport (the part played by Martine Beswick in *Thunderball*). Formerly a stage actress, Saskia was born in Africa, educated in Moscow and now lives in Paris. During the Festival she explained that her part had been drastically cut in *Never...* For example, she'd had a big fight scene with Barbara Carrera that had taken a lot of preparation (Bernie Casey, the black Leiter, had helped her by giving her lessons in unarmed combat) and had involved her finally being strangled by Ms Carrera using one of her stockings. All of it was cut and now there's just the shot of Bond



finding her body on the waterbed. Saskia also revealed that the *Never* script was being virtually rewritten as they shot the picture and that the finished movie bore little resemblance to the original screenplay.

Christopher Wood was the last to arrive and he turned out to be an alarmingly tall man. Thankfully Marc again failed to explain who I was and I began to think I might get through the whole weekend without having to confess the authorship of that book. But later, in the restaurant that Marc had taken us all to, Peter Hunt, who was sitting opposite me, asked point-blank the reason I was guest at the Festival. Glancing nervously at Wood, who was sitting beside me, and taking a firm hold on my steak knife, I explained about *James Bond in the Cinema...*

The response from Hunt was reassuring; he not only knew of the book he even had a copy at home in Hollywood. "You wrote some nice things about me," he said with a smile. And thankfully Wood hadn't read the book. "Have you covered all the Bonds?" he asked me suspiciously. "Oh no," I replied quickly, "It's rather out of date now..."

He then asked me if I'd written about his two movies but before I could answer Lois Maxwell created a convenient diversion by recounting an

amusing anecdote about the making of *Octopussy*. It concerned the scene where Roger Moore as Bond entered her office and mistook the back of another, younger, woman's for her's. Maxwell was supposed to say, "I'm over here, James. This is my new assistant, Penelope Smallbones." The rehearsals went well but when the camera was rolling she heard herself saying, "This is my new assistant, Penelope Smallbush..."

While the crew went into convulsions Moore looked at her and said accusingly, "It's easy to see where your mind is at, Miss Moneypenny."

Later during the weekend Ms Maxwell explained how she got the role of Moneypenny; back in 1962 her husband was very ill, she had a young son to support and so she was desperate for money. She knew both Broccoli and Terence Young and begged them for a part in the small movie they were about to make, *Dr No*. They told her she could have a choice of two parts, Miss Moneypenny or the girl who ends up in Bond's apartment wearing the top half of his pyjamas and putting golfballs across the floor. "I'm hopeless at golf so I chose Miss Moneypenny," (Eunice Gayson got the putting job; by the way, did you know that Lois Maxwell's real name is Lois Hooker? I wonder why she changed it...) Ms Maxwell revealed that, surprisingly, she has no firm arrangement with Broccoli regarding the Moneypenny role. She never knows until shortly before each Bond is due to start whether or not she'll be in the movie. Nor has the money been particularly good; she even had to wear her own clothes in the first three Bonds. What was even worse was that she couldn't get her clothes back until the pictures had completed shooting, and on one occasion discovered that her clothes had been annexed by the wife of one of the producers, Mrs Harry Saltzman. It wasn't until *Thunderball* that the film company provided her costumes for the movie, and it wasn't until *Diamonds Are Forever*, six years later, that she finally got it written into her contract that she was allowed to keep the costumes at the end of the shooting. But the producers had outwitted her: her only scene was as a policewoman!

Ms Maxwell was asked, at one point during the Festival, whether she preferred Sean Connery or Roger Moore. She had a good answer: "I always say I'd like to have Roger as my husband and Sean as my lover."

The Festival proper wasn't due to begin until the



BOND IN BERLIN

► Saturday afternoon and so on Saturday morning I went off on my own to look at The Wall. Now as The Wall completely encircles West Berlin you'd think it would be easy to find but naturally I had problems. "It's around here somewhere," I muttered to myself as I stumbled through the famous Tiergarten park. "In fact it's around here everywhere..."

On the way I passed two sinister-looking buildings all sealed up with fences around them. Guy Hamilton later told me they were part of the old War Ministry and that he'd shot inside one of them when making *Funeral in Berlin* back in 1966. I finally found The Wall which didn't look as high as it does on tv or the movies. I climbed a platform put there for the benefit of tourists and was able to see over the other side. The sun was shining and the cleared strip of land that runs along the East Berlin side looked deceptively innocent. No sign of automatic machine guns and mines and other fun devices; just a couple of bored-looking guards on foot patrol and a lone observer in a distant watch-tower. Even so it was a depressing and disturbing sight and so I decided I'd had enough of reality and that it was time to retreat back to the hotel and fantasy of James Bond...

After fortifying myself with one or two (well, several) glasses of German lager I joined Saskia Tanugi, Guy Hamilton and Christopher Wood in front of the audience and the tv cameras, feeling not a little embarrassed. But it turned out to be a relatively painless experience and, for a collector of Bond trivia, a fascinating one. Guy Hamilton, for example, revealed that they were so rushed to complete *Goldfinger* in time for its 25th of September 1964 premiere that one entire reel went into the movie *unedited*. However he didn't say which one...

Hamilton also revealed that Bond's famous Aston Martin in *Goldfinger* wasn't the marvel of technology it appeared to be. "The only gadget in it that actually worked were the revolving number plates," he said. "For scenes where it was squirting out oil in the path of the pursuing vehicles there was a poor man hidden in the back and frantically pumping out the stuff by hand. And in the ejector seat scene the actor simply jumped to his feet and then we cut to a long shot of a dummy being thrown into the air..."

So much for illusion. Hamilton talked about car problems in a later Bond, *Diamonds Are Forever*, too. They involved the sequence where the car tilts over onto two wheels and slips out through the narrow alleyway in Las Vegas to escape the pursuing police car. According to Hamilton the American stunt drivers had a lot of trouble getting the trick to work and after wrecking a number of cars had only produced one brief shot of Bond's car on two wheels emerging into the Las Vegas street. It was decided that the establishing shot would have to be done when the unit returned to Pinewood Studio.

So, a couple of months later, a replica of the Las Vegas alley was built at the British studio. A stunt driver who specialised in doing the two wheel trick was brought in and successfully got Bond's car to do its balancing act. It was only when the film was being edited that Hamilton made the discovery that in the British shots the car tilted in the opposite

direction from the one in Las Vegas...

One question I personally asked Hamilton was why Roger Moore's fight scenes were never as impressive as Connery's, even when choreographed by the same stunt arranger. Hamilton explained the difference in approach between Connery and Moore when it comes to fighting. Connery apparently just goes in swinging and is unperturbed if he accidentally flattens a stunt man—"That's what they're paid for," says Connery—whereas Moore rehearses his fights very carefully and takes great pains not to hurt his opponent. "Not surprisingly," said Hamilton, "stunt men are not too keen to work with Sean but they love working with Roger."

To my horror Hamilton admitted that he'd wanted to cast Burt Reynolds as Bond in *Diamonds Are Forever* but that was before Reynolds had become a big star and the producers vetoed the idea. Fortu-

nately Connery was finally persuaded to return to the role...

I winced on Christopher Wood's behalf when a young German fan innocently enquired why *Moonraker* was the worst of all the Bonds even though it's a judgement I concur with. Wood claimed that he had fought against the worst excesses in the picture, such as the turning of Jaws into a sympathetic character, and the sentimental love affair between Jaws and the blonde girl with the pigtailed, but to no avail. He wasn't happy with the casting of Michael Lonsdale as Drax either. He felt the same about the casting of Curt Jurgens in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (and I completely agree with him on that; Jurgens was one of the most boring Bond villains of all). "Originally James Mason was to have played Stromberg but had prior commitments," said Wood.



Wood also described what a shock it was during the making of *Spy* to suddenly find himself being personally sued by Sean Connery who accused him of stealing elements from *Warhead* in his screenplay for *Spy*. It was all part of the rich legal tapestry of law suits and counter-suits going on between the two Bond camps at the time but Wood found the experience very traumatic.

One interesting thing he revealed was that the pre-credits sequence of *Octopussy*, with Bond blowing up the hangar in his mini-jet, had originally been written by Wood for a sequence in *Moonraker*. "Cubby Broccoli never throws a good idea away," he said, "If it can't be used in one picture it turns up in another."

Saskia Tanugi talked about her role, what was left of it, in *Never Say Never Again*, and said that the only Bond film she'd ever seen was *Thunderball* which was screened for her before the start of *Never*. She liked working with Connery, who gave her a paternalistic squeeze on the cheek everytime she finished a take correctly (her top cheek, that is). Saskia hinted that Barbara Carrera was a little odd to work with ("I'd have to know more about her early life to know why she behaves the way she does now," said Saskia cryptically) but that she really liked Kim Bessinger.

The following afternoon it was the turn of Peter Hunt and Lois Maxwell to face the audience. They were unexpectedly joined by Hunt's old Bond colleague, art director Syd Cain, who by a strange coincidence happened to be in Berlin that same weekend on a location scout for a new movie.

Among the topics that Hunt covered was the censorship problem that has plagued the Bonds over the years, particularly with the earlier movies. He told an amusing story of having to show, frame-by-frame, the fight involving the two gypsy girls in *From Russia With Love* to a lady from the film censor's office because she was convinced she'd spotted some public hair during a preview screening of the film. "It was just her imagination," said Hunt, "But it took ages to convince her she was wrong."

Marc, our host, explained that in Germany the Bonds have been traditionally classified as children's movies and censored accordingly. As a result many of the fight scenes were cut out, including the fight between Bond and Red Grant in *From Russia With Love* (which is what also happened in Australia). Hunt wasn't happy to hear that *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* was always shown on German tv in a drastically shortened version. And he added he endured the cruellest cut of all with *OHMSS*: it



occurred in South Africa where the censors took exception to Maurice Binder's nudes in the credit sequence. So they cut the shot where the nudes were closest to the camera and at the same time removed Peter Hunt's director's credit from the picture!

On the subject of *OHMSS* Hunt accepted the full responsibility for casting George Lazenby as Bond. He still believes that, with experience, Lazenby might have ended up becoming a fairly good James Bond if he hadn't ruined his chances by antagonising the producers to the point where they wanted nothing more to do with him. "Everybody in the unit went out of their way to help George, especially Diana Rigg," said Hunt, "But he was badly advised by his agents and other people who encouraged him to throw his weight around."

Hunt revealed that originally in *OHMSS* there was a long sequence where one of Blofeld's men eavesdrops on Bond in Sir Hilary Bray's office; after a chase through London a fake train crash was arranged, involving a whole carriage full of corpses, to fool Blofeld into thinking Bond was dead. It was all shot but cut from the film because of length.

He also told how the avalanche sequence in *OHMSS* went wrong - he'd been told to wait until



the Swiss Army let him know the snow was ready for the controlled avalanche and that they would set it off with explosive charges. Days passed and every day he was told the snow wasn't ready to be shifted yet; then one morning he got up and found it had all disappeared. The avalanche had occurred spontaneously during the night...

"We faked the whole avalanche back at Pinewood using special effects and a bit of library footage from a Walt Disney nature film," admitted Hunt.

The Festival ended that night with, appropriately enough, a screening of my favourite Bond, *Goldfinger*. It was a strange experience to be viewing it in the presence of its director, Guy Hamilton (who hadn't seen it for years) and Lois Maxwell. It was also interesting that Saskia Tanugi, who had never seen it before, found it very impressive. "It was much better than *Never Say Never Again*," she told me later and I had to agree...

But as far as strange experiences go that morning had been hard to beat. Lois, Saskia and I accepted an invitation by the organisers to visit East Berlin. We entered by car through Checkpoint Charlie (which had featured in *Octopussy* among other spymovies) and for awhile there I was afraid we weren't going to get any further. The trouble occurred when Lois asked me to take a photograph of her holding up the little plastic bag full of East German currency that you're obliged to buy when you go through the border. She wanted the photo for a newspaper she writes for back in Canada. So, with a great deal of laughing, we took the photo...

Then, after we all got back in the car, our way was blocked by a couple of surly-looking East German officials who were less than amused by our photo-session and wanted to rip the film from Miss Maxwell's camera. I could see the headline: **MISS MONEYPENNY ARRESTED AT CHECK-POINT CHARLIE! AUSTRALIAN HACK SHOT AS SPY!**

But our driver soothed the East Germans' ruffled feathers and we were finally allowed to continue. The rest of the East Berlin expedition was very enjoyable and later, as I sat there between the two Bond ladies drinking Russian vodka as the car sped through the unreal landscape of the world beyond The Wall I reflected that going to see a movie called *Dr No* almost exactly 20 years ago in Perth, West Australia, has had many repercussions in my life but this particular one had to rate as the most memorable.



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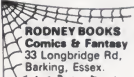
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As I pointed out in the last two *TV Zone* columns, *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who* have an enormous fan network. Second only to *Doctor Who* must be the Gerry Anderson Appreciation Society. Its excellent magazine, *SIG*, is edited with a professional touch by David Nightingale. However, when a group of dedicated "Anderfans" turned up recently on Noel Edmonds' programme *The Time of Your Life*, they managed to successfully embarrass everybody present including themselves. When one remarked about the importance of calling *Star Trek* fans "Trekkers" and not "Trekkies" I visibly blanched. There hasn't been such fanaticism on the small screen since the early days of the *Mickey Mouse Club*, although at least in the Fifties they put their point across with a bit more sincerity.

Fortunately, science fiction television has, in the main, encouraged a somewhat saner bunch of people, who show an interest in these shows usually relegated to the dustbins of fandom.

There is The Avengers Appreciation Society headed by Dave Rogers, with a growing number of loyal supporters, and of course one mustn't overlook Six of One The Prisoner fan club. Six of One has reached a stable footing, and despite one recent misdemeanour – a looney assignment round London dressed as Villagers (remember the character talking to his friends on the lower deck of a bus via a megaphone?) on Channel 4 – seems to conduct itself in a sensible fashion.

Now from the depths of Southend-on-Sea, a new fan club has emerged under the guiding hands of Joseph Beedell, Mark Birch and Chris Deakins, all founder members of Orion, a club set up to "appreciate" TV science fiction, past and present. Of course, they won't ignore the *Star Treks* and *Doctor Whos* of this world, but are the first to admit that these shows already have a comprehensive coverage. They will be concentrating their efforts on *The Outer Limits*, *The Twilight Zone*, *Battlestar Galactica* and those perennial Irwin Allen shows of the Sixties. In America, although most Trekkies – sorry Trekkers – would deny it, there does exist a small number of fan clubs dedicated to these other shows. Lee Sobel of New York, for example, ran a successful fanzine called *Orion Warrior*, mostly on *Star Trek*, though he never lost sight of the importance of other TV programmes and would occasionally produce a special on other series. Issue 12, produced in Feb '79, was a *Collectors' Edition* featuring 66 pages of previously unpublished info on *Lost In Space*. Another highly active Irwin Allen fan is Flint Mitchell of St Louis. His *LISFAN* magazine garnered a huge support among American SF TV fans. And now Mitchell is helping Beedell and Co to get Orion off to a good start.

Membership costs £3.00 a year; the

TV ZONE

by Richard Holliss



Debbie and the Deggit! TV SF shows may come and go, but cosmic kids' pets stay the same. In *Lost In Space* Angela Cartwright as Penny Robinson (above) had a ridiculous-looking chimp with a tea-cosy on its head, while aboard the *Battlestar Galactica* Noah Hathaway as Boney amused himself with Muffin 2 (another monkey in a costume!). Right, Billy Mumy as Will Robinson in *Lost In Space*.



package contains a badge, membership card, and the first of a quarterly newsletter. Among the merchandise on offer are blueprints of the Jupiter II and a list of photographs from *Battlestar Galactica*, *Lost In Space*, *Land of the Giants*, *The Time Tunnel* and *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*. The quality of the pictures could be improved upon, but as most of them contain clips from the shows never before seen, they are certainly worth every penny. The first newsletter features a fan's view of *Battlestar Galactica* by Claire Heywood, a list of convention dates including the *Star Trek* Midcon 84, and the addresses for *Star Trek* (The New Enterprise) and *Fanderson*. There is also a review of the SF novel, "Warlock of Firetop Mountain," published in Puffin, and the recent film, *Psycho II*. Forthcoming features promised are *Land of the Giants*, *The Prisoner*, *Space 1999* and the work of Jerry Goldsmith. The address to write to is Orion, 73 Bournemouth Park Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, enclosing a SAE.

As already stated photographs from various TV shows are always an added bonus for joining most fan clubs. With *Star Trek* there has been an abundance of material from badges to specially produced posters. When the series first began on British television every magazine on the market carried something from the show, whether it was pull-out colour stills, or picture strip stories. Likewise, the creation of Six of One enabled members to buy licensed photographs from *The Prisoner*, an excellent selection being offered with each new issue of *Alert*.



In fact, most film shops in Hollywood sell a large selection of SF TV material, everything from *The Time Tunnel* to *Quatermass*. Ridiculous when you consider that a high percentage is from British shows and yet over her British fans search in vain. Perhaps now is the right time for the film and TV companies in Britain to give the few SF retailers that we have permission to sell stills from the more popular shows. In this way the fans are happy, and there would be a profitable business for all, including Equity. Hopefully the hard work undertaken by the fan clubs will encourage this to take place in the not-too-distant future.



He told me to meet him at his office saying that nobody could lose on restricted budget movies. When I walked in to see him, he put down four scripts on his desk and told me to choose one. One was *The Philadelphia Experiment*, but only in a production capacity. Another was a film I may yet do called *Tough Turf* but the script hadn't been completed at that time. I was more excited about that than anything but then he came back with *Children of the Corn* and told me it was a "go" project and that it would be just right for me as it had a smaller comfortable budget. He said it could be done very quickly in 25 days and it had to be shot before the corn turned golden. I took it away, read it, met the owners of New World and was on a plane to Iowa to scout for locations. On the day I turned 32 I was given the script and then two days later we were flying off. Incredible really! We chose the town of Whiting in Iowa mainly because it was so close to other major cities and had ancillary things to recommend it like good

production support. We ended up using a composite of three towns for Gatlin moving a landmark around so they would all match. Then it was back for a week of casting and we got in maybe another week of rehearsal before we left for a month of solid shooting. So we had about 3½ weeks of preparation and an editing period of ten weeks. So all in all it was a non-stop schedule of 18 weeks working 7 full days for everyone of them."

Although Kiersch had read the Stephen King short story in *Night Shift*, he never read King's first draft screenplay for the projected movie. "I don't even know what happened in it! He wrote it a number of years ago and it was his first screenplay. It circulated around for a while and somehow ended up with Hal Roach who purchased it and immediately turned it over to another writer, George Goldsmith, to work on. This was the only version I read before we started on it ourselves at New World because our story really takes off from the end of the King

original. I always wanted to make sure that we didn't forget to resolve the question of the children. I never liked the end of the film originally which was having them all literally disappear off the face of the earth. I wanted the idea of having one child return, but the producer insisted she still prove to be a fanatic out to kill the adults. It is rather an abrupt ending because we came up with the idea while we were on location. As it stands it looks like an homage to all those '50s B-movies that ran out of money."

While still filming *Children of the Corn*, David Cronenberg's *The Dead Zone* opened in American cinemas to glowing reviews, and Kiersch admits to being somewhat phased by it all. "There have been so many Stephen King adaptations lately. Being compared to those really scared me. Especially *The Dead Zone* because the critics literally raved about it saying how future adaptations would have to be measured by it. In other words everything else would be crap! At that point I felt



CHILDREN OF THE CORN

like shooting myself because everything seemed to be conspiring against me, the producer, the time and the money, to make me fail. But I just had to forget about all the other guys — easy to do with *The Shining* I must add — and make a film that didn't give strength to Stephen King but to the story itself. All of King's ideas are good, he has a special knack of putting an anthropomorphic quality into all his scary moments and you would be foolish not to use it. King actually wrote a nice letter to New World about the movie and I was pleased because, as it is a short story stretched out to feature length, lots of people are quick to find fault with it. The pacing is slow, they say, but I can't say I find that myself, personally speaking. There is that line though, 'Things just aren't happening fast enough'. You live and learn, don't you? It was an unfortunately timed line because that fact was transparently obvious. At the time of filming though, it's all out of context so you don't notice. We definitely lose some of the audience at precisely that moment in the film."

As Kiersch doesn't like the gore approach to horror movies, he limited the amount of blood used in *Children of the Corn*. "I hate the pain conjured up by all the recent splatter-squirting offerings. Our picture was much more suggestive giving it much more impact. That is maybe the most successful part of the film. We also did have very poor special effects support. The effects at the ending really do suck. We had a lot of problems there mainly because we had to shoot all those scenes first before the corn changed from green to gold. When we first blew up the cornfield, the explosion wasn't big enough. So after four hours, our 'crack crew' tried again doing all they could with cans of gasoline. Everything was fine with this second experiment except that the wind came up and blew everything out of frame. We had the cameras locked down so the sequence could be optically enhanced at a later date and as a result the anticipated mushrooming effect vanished off left frame. Then our 'crack crew' announced they had run out of gas! The deadline meant we had to carry on and make do with the little we had. If we had had one more week to play around with the opticals we would have come up with something that made sense. But we did very well for the amount of money this film cost as it does come across as a more expensive production knowing the size and scope of it. It works well on certain levels."

Actually showing the "monster" at the climax proved to be a problem too, says Kiersch. "There was always something about it. The studio quizzed me relentlessly about what it would eventually look like and I said, what it definitely wasn't going to be was a stuntman in a rubber suit wriggling about. It finally got through to them that what you don't see is far more terrifying. As 'He who walks behind the rows' had to personify the elements and take different shapes and forms, I think we achieved that nebulous quality. I came up with the mole effect while we were on location mainly because until that point nothing much had happened apart from a plant wrapping itself around a man. What I did want to do was have the ground crack open and present an obstacle course for the hero but it just cost so much. So we came up with the idea of putting an upturned



Top: A portrait of John Franklin as Isaac, the demonic leader of a cult of obsessed teenagers. Middle: Peter Horton interrupts a bloody ritual and receives an impromptu sermon from Julie Meddala as a dazed John Philbin looks on. Bottom: These people look on in terror as the supernatural being, He Who Walks Behind the Rows, makes his presence known. Right: Courtney Geins, as the keeper of the lewis, holds Linda Hamilton captive.



wheel-barrow in a dug out trench and covering it back up with earth. When a tractor pulled it off camera, we came up with that very nice rippling effect. Unfortunately instead of getting a tractor that would drive at 10 m.p.h. we hired one that did about 90. So at one stage the little boy in the scene was overtaken by the movement by about 50 feet. Needless to say we cut in the movie before you actually see that happening."

But above all that, staying on schedule turned out to be Fritz Kiersch's major headache. "Children of the Corn was strictly a financial film. It is a business after all and the producers certainly didn't want to push expenses up as it goes against the profits. The quickest way of doing that is to fall behind schedule. We had a woman with us at all

times from a completion bond insurance agency who underwrote the film and were paid a premium to do so. She became very concerned that we would touch our contingency too early when we went over schedule for a few days right at the beginning of the film. Instead of doing what others might have done — just rip a few pages out of the script therefore drastically ruining it — I took the decision to pick up time by pushing harder and going faster. Planning how to do that became a real problem. We filmed all of R.G. Armstrong's cameo in a day, and if you'll remember, he is in it quite a lot. That was the hardest transition from commercials. I had to think on my feet a lot more especially when I had only two minutes left to shoot in because you just couldn't go into overtime. After



having the luxury, and not really knowing it to be so, of averaging 20 takes on a commercial, 3 takes had to do it at the most on *Children of the Corn*."

Nothing however could quell the excitement of directing a major motion picture for Kiersch though. "You know, some people say that commercial directors can only talk for 30 seconds! That just isn't true because in a way making commercials can be so frustrating as you usually have to go along with the client's ideas on how to sell their product. Many times we aren't given the chance to bring that extra something to the idea, to make it work and give it some life. Any character embellishment is redundant. So when I got this movie, it was a case of me yelling for joy knowing that at last I could do everything I've

ever wanted. That was really a treat. Stephen King's name was bound to make the film make money so in some ways I did hitch my wagon to a star. The film is doing well and I hope it sticks around long enough to keep my name visible on the marquees. For a first film it certainly worked out all right."

It certainly did, as Fritz Kiersch is now in the throes of trying to get *The Howling II* onto the screen. "At the moment we are trying to get the script into some sort of shape. Discussions are occurring at the moment that may make the film something not everyone involved wants to make. My hope is that the film will be a continuation focussing on one character and following them. At the moment it looks like being the man who pulls the trigger on the woman reporter; and it investi-

gates the werewolf clan to find them all situated in very prominent and powerful positions. *The Howling* really is a tough act to follow and one that has drawn an enormous amount of curiosity. The transformation scenes we are discussing at the moment with Rick Baker have never been seen in a motion picture before. Here we intend to have a whole person transforming at once with no cutaways or cheap mechanical effects. I don't want the film to be just a vehicle for fabulous effects though. A solid storyline will make audiences just expecting that appreciate them even more. I would like to share Joe Dante's campy approach but *The Howling 2* definitely isn't tongue in cheek. We will match and surpass the first one though, no doubt about it."

DEBRA HILL



Starburst's John Brosnan interviews the Producer of David Cronenberg's *The Dead Zone* about her latest film and her early involvement with popular genre director John Carpenter.



Okey, let's be blatantly sexist and say right away that Debra Hill seems too cute and sweet to be a Hollywood producer. We all know that Hollywood producers have to be tough and ruthless to survive in the jungle that is the American film industry and yet here is little Miss Hill, who must be in her early 30s but looks about 20, radiating girlish charm and innocence all over the place. During our interview I sought in vain the glint of steel that I knew must lurk below the surface but Miss Hill didn't drop her guard once. Either she really is as sweet as she appears or she's as good an actress as she is a producer.

I began my probing, in-depth interview with a real toughie of a question:

Starburst: Miss Hill — do you mind if I call you Debra? — how did you start off in the film industry?

Debra Hill: I started off really when I was 8 years old. My father gave me a little Super-8 movie camera and I'd get the kids in the neighborhood to play-act roles and I made these little silent films. This was in Haddonfield, New Jersey, where I grew up. But when I went to college there really weren't that many places where you could go to film school, and my parents couldn't afford to send me to U.S.C. in Los Angeles, so I took the film courses that were available at college but they were mostly all theory.

Then I got a job in a documentary film company and learnt a lot that way. I went out to LA with these skills and worked for ... *nothing*. I worked on anything that I could find, and eventually built up a number of pictures. Then I was introduced to John Carpenter and I worked on *Assault on Precinct 13* and we decided to collaborate on future projects. But before I met John I'd worked on about 8 pictures as a script supervisor, assistant editor and 2nd unit director. What were some of their titles?

Oh, real biggies like *Melvin in the Bounty*, *High Riders*, *Charge of the Model Ts* ... nothing that anyone over here would have heard of. You know, in LA in those days there was a real tax advantage for people to put up money as high risk capital and if the picture was shelved they were able to write it off. That's why, in the early to mid-70s, there was a whole bunch of pictures that were made but nobody ever saw.

What were the problems in making the early Carpenter films on such small budgets?

Assault had a 360,000 dollar budget and I think we shot it in 24 days. *Halloween* was only 300,000 dollars and we shot 20 days. We had 3 weeks of preproduction on *Halloween* which was just enough time to say, "Okay, everybody, we're going to work now..." We shot for under 3 weeks and then John and I edited the picture. Both of us worked for nothing. Doing *Halloween* on such a small budget meant that right from the beginning we decided to write it small. So we wrote it for 5 characters. And we wrote it to be filmed at night most of the time because even though night-shooting takes longer to light you can *hide* a lot of things at night. Like *Halloween* is set in the Autumn but we were shooting in March so we had to get bags of leaves and throw them around in front of the camera so by shooting at night we could save on leaves for one thing. Night shooting hid a lot of sins. We also decided to do it in Panavision because that gave it a bigger look. I think the wide screen gives the movie-goer the illusion that the picture is bigger and more expensive than it really is.



Opposite top: Kurt Russell as Snake Pliskens, hero of *Escape from New York*. Inset: A portrait of producer Debra Hill. Opposite below: Jamie Lee Curtis pads nervously down a hospital corridor in *Halloween 2*. Top: Donald Pleasance as the President of the United States in *Escape from New York*. Above: Trick or treat? Seasonal revellers go about their business in *Halloween 3*. Below: *The Shapel* The one thing that sets this knife wielder apart from his colleagues is that he really is the Bogy Men!



Halloween was the first picture you produced. What was it like to be a producer for the first time?

I was scared, real scared. On all the pictures I'd worked on before the crews always complained about the producer. So one of the things I decided to do was feed the crew well. Usually when someone does a low-budget movie the first thing they say is, "Right, everyone is going to eat cheap and *like* it!" But a film crew is like an army, they move on their stomachs, as Napoleon said. So I felt if I fed them well they'd be on my side and understand when we had to work late or whatever. That was one thing, number two was that I'd worked with all those people on pictures before. They knew me well and were willing to work cheaply for me because they liked me and wanted me to succeed. And that is one of the secrets as to how we made those kind of pictures on the budgets we had - they looked good because the people who made them weren't just hired hands, it was a labour of love for all concerned. *Jumping ahead to The Dead Zone*, how did you adjust to being the producer of such a big-budget movie for the first time?

It wasn't really that bigger a budget than what I've been used to in the past. It only cost a million dollars more than *Escape from New York*. It came in for around 7 million. It was a great advantage to shoot it in Canada because we saved 20 per cent on the exchange rate. But the picture had its own problems for me. We had an incredibly large cast and we had major actors which is something I hadn't had to deal with before. Also I was shooting in a foreign country and was away for 6 months. I bought only 5 people

DEBRA HILL

with me from the US so I had to get used to dealing with a different crew. I think the Canadian crew was a little sceptical about me at first – sort of, “Who is this American lady? Her father must be very rich for her to be up here making a movie,” which is not true... And I also had to get used to working with a new director. Even though John Carpenter didn’t direct *Halloween 2* or *3* I knew both directors well. Tommy Lee Wallace, who directed *3* was an old comrade – he was art director on *Assault*, and sound editor too, he did those great gun shots, and worked on *The Fog* as well, so I had to get to know David Cronenberg. That really took place in the writing stage. We got Jeffrey Boam, the script writer, and the three of us spent many, many days in hotel rooms working on the story. And that’s where we really got to know one another. David turned out to be a great person to work with and we had marvelous communication between us.

How was Dino De Laurentiis to work with?

Well, this is my third picture with him – he financed *Halloween 2 & 3*, so I have a good relationship with him though I know some people say they’ll never work with him again. In my case I have a great deal of respect for him. With *Dead Zone* he collaborated on the script with us and made some really important suggestions. He’s also wonderful at casting. Sometimes I don’t think his pictures are so successful but the casting is always great...

*You certainly had a good cast in *Dead Zone*. And I thought Christopher Walken was particularly good even though I don’t normally like him as an actor. I think it’s his best-ever performance! I think it’s even better than his one in *The Deer Hunter*. He really wanted to play the character. He called us! He really wanted to be Johnny Smith, and you know what, it’s him. It’s how he is in real life. He’s very introspective, very innocent, vulnerable and quiet. But he’s got a great sense of humour and a fabulous smile. When he smiles it’s like the sun suddenly shining, but he’s never smiled in any of his pictures before that I can recall...*

*He certainly didn’t smile much in *Brainstorm*, and for good reason. But I thought Brooke Adams was very good too.*

Yes, she was. And so was Martin Sheen. We had a terrific cast, thanks to Dino de Laurentiis.

What sort of suggestions did De Laurentiis make during the making of the film?

Well, one of them involved the shooting of the visions. Originally we had Christopher Walken in all the visions but Dino didn’t like the idea. So we told Dino we would shoot it both ways and we did. So now he’s only in the fire vision and the one of the girl getting murdered; he’s not in the underwater one now though we did shoot him in it, and he’s not in the Warsaw World War 2 vision. Originally we had a tank coming through his hospital room. He gets out through the smashed wall and finds himself in Poland in 1939 but it didn’t work. It was too surreal. So we cut all that out. The visions now work as flashes whereas before they were longish scenes, more like the Stillson one at the end where he presses the button to start the third world war... *Was Walken in that scene too originally?*

Yeah, but again we cut him out. So Dino was right when he said he didn’t think it would work but he did let us try it both ways. And it did work great in the gazebo murder scene and the fire in the bedroom. We changed the visions in other ways too. In the book there’s this blackness he gets which is called the “deadzone” – the stuff he can’t see behind – so we had lots of black stuff for a while. We had black



Above: Christopher Walken and Martin Sheen as seen in *The Dead Zone*. Below: Isaac Hayes as *The Duke* in *Escape From New York*. Right: Snake Pliskens has an explosive charge removed from his neck by Dr Cronenberg (no relation to David!). Below right: Adrienne Barbeau as a radio disc jockey in *The Fog*, directed by John Carpenter and produced by Debra Hill.

ink in the underwater vision, we had lots of black smoke in the other visions but we decided to cut it out. That was a decision we made in the editing room... David really makes his movies in the editing room. He’s very different from John because John makes the film *before* we start to shoot. He’s got it all in his head, all edited, and knows what he wants. He’s very conservative about the amount of footage he shoots whereas David shoots a lot and edits it...

How did Cronenberg get on with De Laurentiis?

Very good. He must have because his next picture is also for Dino. It’s called *Total Recall* and written by Dan O’Bannon and Ron Shusett and based on a Philip K. Dick novel.

*You have some impressive special effects sequences in *The Dead Zone*. How was the crash involving the skidding tanker trailer staged?*



Jon Belyeu was really responsible for that and a lot of the really terrific effects in the movie. He was marvellous. It was scary for him because it was his first big show. I brought him up to Canada with me, and the stunt co-ordinator Dick Warlock, because I thought the weakest areas in *Poland* film making would be stunts and effects. They’d both worked for me before on the *Halloween* pictures. We set up this enormous effects shop for the movie and hired 11 people to work under Jon. There’d never been anything like it in Toronto before. For the tanker scene Jon and Dick Warlock worked very closely together to design that particular stunt. They bought two identical tankers – one you see driving along the road, the other one Jon cut the tanker trailer from the rig, turned it on its side and then had a crane push it along the road, on the side away from the camera. Jon put all those lights along it that made it look like something out of *Close Encounters* as it

loomed over the hill. Jon also put two cages inside it so that two men could ride inside to make those friction sparks you see when it seems to be skidding sideways along the road.

How long did it take to do the fire sequence?

A whole day. We did three takes on it. Every time we did it we had to redress the room. So we had three of everything, three doll’s houses, three fish tanks...

Three little girls?

The little girl was fine. She was never in any danger from the flames, it was the heat that scared her, and she was scared because things were popping all around her but she was completely safe. The corner of the room she was crouching in was removable so when the flames got too hot she would scream *Out!* and we would move the section back and the stunt man would grab her. There was one time when she became hysterical afterwards but she had been well rehearsed by Dick Warlock. He did a tremendously good job of teaching her, as well as all the boys in the hockey game drowning sequence.

It was a really difficult sequence because David had to learn Scuba diving to direct it and Christopher Walken and the little boys had to have these air tubes in their mouths... the boys had to have ballast in their costumes because the hockey equipment was buoyant and they would have floated to the surface otherwise. We had to be totally reliant on the divers supporting them – they would bring them down from the surface and position them; the moment we started to shoot the divers would take the tubes away, then they’d put the tubes back and take the boys and Christopher back up. It was a very slow and tedious process. We shot it in 16mm and blew it up. We had to shoot it in a swimming pool because it was impossible to find a studio tank big enough for our purposes in Toronto...

Do you feel nervous when you do these potentially dangerous scenes?

Well, I had a terrible thing happen to me once on a picture I was working on. It was *High Riders* and I was the script supervisor and second unit director on it. The stunt co-ordinator was a marvellous man called Vic Rivers. He’d been stunt co-ordinator on *Eat My Dust* and *Grand Theft Auto*, the first movie that Ron (Splash) Howard directed. He had to perform this stunt where he drove a pick-up truck off a ramp and into a lake. I don’t know what happened on the ramp but he de-accelerated and took a nose-dive into the water instead of landing as he should have done. When you hit water at speed it’s like hitting concrete – he went straight through the windshield, his crash helmet came off and he wasn’t

able to reach his oxygen supply. We had divers in the water because we were prepared okay but he got buried under the truck. They pulled the truck off him but he was about 15 minutes underwater by my stop-watch and he was literally blue when they brought him up. He died but even if he hadn't died he would have had excessive brain damage. So now safety in stunt sequences is just the most important thing of all to me and if there's any doubt at all we don't do it, because no shot is worth a life. That's the reason why I believe the *Twilight Zone* thing was an accident. I don't think what they were doing was too dangerous, it was just a total accident and I don't think anyone was responsible...

How do you react to the criticism that Halloween was responsible for the flood of "splatter" movies we've had in recent years?

Well, everyone says that *Halloween* inspired those pictures but the horror genre is one of the oldest of all film genres; it goes back to Lon Chaney, Frankenstein, Dracula and so on. I was raised on those sort of pictures in the 1950s, movies like *The Beast With Five Fingers*, *The Thing* and all that, so *Halloween* was not new. But what it did, because it was such an extreme commercial success, was not so much inspire 'slasher' pictures but inspired producers to make low budget pictures that would hopefully make millions of dollars. And so what happened was that the market got swamped and as the market got swamped the audiences wanted more and more in the way of visual excess and finally the images got so disgustingly gross and excessively violent... and I'm probably guilty of going in that direction myself in *Halloween 2*...

But with Halloween 3 you went in an entirely different direction.

Joe Dante suggested that. He was doing a picture at Universal, the remake of *The Creature From the Black Lagoon* which never actually got made, and he had Nigel Kneale over to work on the script. We called Joe to see if he'd be interested in directing *Halloween 3* - we'd been asked to do a third *Halloween* and we were stumped with it because the Shape was dead and Jamie would never do another one - and Joe suggested getting Nigel Kneale to do the script. So he came and talked to us and went off and thought about it and then came up with this sort of an idea...

It wasn't as successful as the other two movies. Why do you think that was?

If it had been called *Season of the Witch* instead of *Halloween 3* I think it would have been a success. People were disappointed because they were expecting to see Jamie Lee and the Shape... we kept saying, "Look guys, let's just call it *Season of the Witch*, it'll do better", but they wouldn't listen... I understand Nigel Kneale wasn't too happy with the finished film because of all the changes you'd made. No he wasn't happy at all...

Would I be right in saying you found his original screenplay a little too old-fashioned? I'm a great fan of his work but I can see how his approach could be rather tame for today's young horror fans.

Yes, it was too old fashioned. It really was. But I think *Alien* ruined it for us all. When the monster came out of John Hurt's chest, audiences just went crazy and demanded more of that sort of thing. I think the ultimate in that sort of stuff is John's *The Thing*... And yet it wasn't a success. Why not, if audiences wanted those visceral type of effects?

John and I are very, very close but I think that the picture was just too excessive. It became more Rob Bottin's picture than John's. And speaking as a movie-goer and not a friend of John's, I would have liked to have known more about the characters. As I didn't know them I didn't feel anything for them as each of them encountered the Thing. It didn't

register emotionally. John disobeyed all the rules of suspense that he'd handled so very well in *Halloween*. In *Halloween* we spent the first 30 minutes of the film getting to know these girls so the audience would care when they got killed. And in the end Jamie Lee beats out the Shape and wins whereas in *The Thing* Kurt Russell and the other guy are just sitting there looking at each other and saying, well, it's either you or me... There was no sense of relief at the end.

I understand he shot more background material on the characters but cut it out.



Yeah, he did. I don't know why he cut it but I never saw what he cut. I only saw the finished movie. I visited him on the set a few times but that was as far as my involvement with *The Thing* went because I was shooting something else. But I do know he cut some stuff and also rewrote and reshot some scenes, but I don't know why he made that decision I think the film is underrated. I like it.

Well, you would, you're a writer for *Starburst* magazine! That's a real minority group, don't you think?

You'd be surprised at how many of us there are. But let's discuss the sort of films you like. You said you grew up on horror films...

Yeah, I loved them. My favourites were stuff like *The Beast With Five Fingers*... I don't watch them now. My favourite picture for this year was *The Big Chill*. When it ended I didn't want to leave the theatre. I wanted more...

*But why are women generally not fans of horror films? You are an exception to the rule. When you ask the average woman what her favourite film was as a child she doesn't normally say *The Beast With Five Fingers*...*

(At this point Miss Hill went bright red and giggled with embarrassment. I suddenly realized why and started to blush too... she had mentioned the damn film twice... it wasn't my fault.)

I must have been very weird as a kid (she said when she'd recovered her composure) but in the 1950s what else was there? You had to love stuff like *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *The Creeping Eye*... they were great. I loved to be scared when I was a kid. I just loved that. I used to love the Saturday night horror show on TV which was hosted by a guy called Igor who used to climb out of a coffin at the start of the programme cackling...

But there does seem to be a feminist aversion to the very idea of people enjoying being scared by horror pictures.

The reason they don't like them is because they say the woman is always the victim but one of the most horrifying pictures for me is *Play Misty For Me* when you've got Clint Eastwood as the victim and Jessica Walters doing an incredible job of victimising him. Ah, but the film's been described as misogynistic by feminists because of its treatment of the Walters character.

Yeah, well you can't win with them...

You're not a feminist?

No, absolutely not. I believe we should have equal rights and that women should be allowed to anything they want to do - they may not necessarily do it better than a man but they should have the right to try it, whatever the job. But I don't think that's a very feminist thing. But I'll tell you that I think there are times when I want to be vulnerable - there are moments in a love relationship when that is definitely the case...

Err (I said, after clearing my throat)... what's your next project?

It's called *Head Office*. It's a black comedy about big business in the US. Ken Finkleman, who wrote and directed *Airplane 2*, is the writer/director. We start shooting on July 5th. Then I'm going to do *Clue* with John Landis. It's based on the game known over here as *Clue*-do. Jonathan Lynn, who writes *Yes, Minister*, wrote the screenplay and it's very funny. I've been trying to get this picture made for 4 years. A friend told me it was my Yentl...

Are these comedy movies a deliberate move on your part away from horror?

I think audiences have really been saturated with horror films recently so I think I'll try my hand at comedy for a while but if a good horror idea should come along in the future, or a science fiction or fantasy one, I'd definitely do it.



Romancing The STONE



In the grand tradition of Hollywood action adventure movies, and inspired by the success of the *Indiana Jones* films, comes *Romancing the Stone*. An entertaining story of a successful romance author who finds herself thrust into a real-life adventure in South America with a fearless rogue who resembles the fictional hero of her novels. A classic tale of a perilous quest for legendary treasure, this 20th Century Fox release mixes amusing characters, snappy dialogue and exciting scenery filmed in a variety of exotic locations throughout Mexico.

Romancing the Stone stars Michael Douglas, Kathleen Turner and Danny DeVito. Based on an original screenplay by Diane Thomas the film is directed by Robert Zemeckis and produced for El Corazon Productions, S.A., by Michael Douglas.

Romancing the Stone is Michael Douglas' third film as a producer and the first which he has both produced and starred in since *The China Syndrome*, which was nominated for four Academy Awards in 1979. Douglas' first feature was the phenomenally successful *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, starring Jack Nicholson, which won five Academy Awards in 1975.

In *Romancing the Stone* Michael Douglas plays the larger-than-life role of Jack Colton, a reluctant hero with a roguish sense of humour. It was a welcome change for the actor to have the chance to display the lighter side of his personality after his more serious dramatic roles in films such as *Come and The China Syndrome*.

His co-star Kathleen Turner impressed critics and audiences alike with her sensual glamour in her screen debut as the double-crossing temptress in *Body Heat* and drew rave reviews for sending up her own vamp image in the role of Steve Martin's conniving wife in *The Man With Two Brains*.

Joining Douglas and Turner is Danny DeVito, winner of a 1981 Emmy Award for his portrayal of the diminutive dictator, Louis De Palma, in the long-running comedy series *Taxi*. DeVito recently appeared as one of Shirley MacLaine's suitors in the Oscar-winning *Terms of Endearment*. In *Romancing the Stone* he plays Ralph, the comic henchman of a New York hoodlum who is searching for a legendary Spanish treasure.



SEE- ROMANCING the STONE -FREE

Romancing the Stone opens in this country on 17th August at the Odeon Leicester Square, and on general release across Britain later that month. *Starburst* magazine, in association with 20th Century Fox, is offering you the chance to see *Romancing the Stone* before its opening date.

We have 300 pairs of tickets to give away to the first 300 *Starburst* readers who write in. Simply cut out the special token on this page, and send it to the address below along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

This special offer is limited to one pair of tickets per reader. The screening will be at the massive Odeon Marble Arch on the morning of Sunday, 17th August. Doors open at 10.30 and the film begins at 11.15. No one can be admitted after the film has started, so don't be late!

Send your applications to:
**Romancing the Stone screening,
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Director Robert Zemeckis' first two features were *I Wanna Hold Your Hand*, a nostalgic comedy about the night the Beatles came to America, and *Used Cars*, an irreverent comedy about the American way of life, both executive-produced by Steven Spielberg.

Romancing the Stone is the story of writer Joan Wilder (Kathleen Turner), the best-selling author of a series of romance/adventure novels about "Angelina", Joan's fantasy alter-ego, and her fantasy hero "Jesse", who always rescues Angelina in time to carry her off into the sunset. The shy, insecure and hopelessly romantic Joan believes that somewhere there is a man like Jesse for her.

Joan's safe, isolated New York City existence ends when she learns that her sister Elaine (Mary Ellen Trainor) is being held captive in Cartagena, Colombia, by a couple of thugs (Danny DeVito and Zack Norman) who demand as ransom a treasure map that Joan unknowingly possesses. Joan doesn't want to trek to Colombia with the map, but she also doesn't want her sister killed; despite the worried protests of her publisher and her best friend Gloria (Holland Taylor), she makes the journey. No sooner does she step off the plane than she is tricked into taking the wrong bus by the sinister Zolo (Manuel Ojeda), a corrupt Colombian Federales who has trailed her from New York.

Just when Joan finds herself attacked on an isolated mountain road in the middle of the Colombian jungle, a man silhouetted against the sun and looking like the mythic Jesse comes to her rescue. It is Jack Colton (Michael Douglas), dressed in hunting gear and brandishing a Winchester 12-gauge pump.

For Joan, he is the man from "the heartbeat of her imagination." For Jack, however, she is an incongruous sight, standing there in the middle of the jungle in her three-piece Bergdorf Goodman suit, down coat and four-inch heels and carrying a bulky suitcase. She needs his assistance to get to a telephone; he'll help this frightened and flustered lady only for a price. Reluctantly they strike a deal, and off they go into the jungle, where they are soon on the run from an assorted group of unsavoury characters, all after the map or the treasure to which it presumably leads.





After Record World's unscheduled break, and its return last month with a somewhat belated round-up of a year's-worth of recordings, this month I'm continuing the trip down memory lane by reviewing the soundtracks of movies recently seen on tv.

One such film is *The Final Countdown*, and its score is by John Scott. A search at your local record store is unlikely to turn up a copy, but I managed to find one at 58 Dean Street Records which, surprisingly, resides at 58 Dean Street in London, and is unofficially known as the Cinema Record Shop.

Though *The Final Countdown* is an American film, the music was recorded at The Music Centre in this country by an unnamed, presumably session, orchestra. Add to this that the recording is a Toshiba EMI recording on the East World label, needless to say pressed in Japan, and it all adds up to a multinational offering. Perhaps the fact

that the film strongly involves the Japanese Navy, World War 2 and Pearl Harbour doesn't make this too odd. *The Final Countdown* record works out slightly more expensive than your average compact disc. But it's worth it. This is one soundtrack that – for me at least – works as a recording in its own right. The Main theme is excellent, one of the most memorable I've heard for ages, and the recording also includes



three extracts from the actual soundtrack with the most important pieces of dialogue.

The album cover features the production art-work of the USS Nimitz; F-14 Tomcats just taking off and the Japanese Zeros bearing down on them. The back cover thankfully lists the tracks in English, although the inner sleeve is in Japanese and looks as if it told the listener a heck of a lot about the film. Highly recommended – even at £10+.

Also recently televised is a film that is

not SF in the normally accepted sense, nor really fantasy, more "And Related". The score of *The Billion Dollar Brain*, the third in the Harry Palmer series, is by noted British composer, Richard Rodney Bennett, and if you cast your mind back to the film you will remember that it has a very Russian flavour, even though very little of the action is set in the Soviet Union itself. My original mention of the film way back came because I noted that part of Shostakovich's Symphony Number 7 – the Leningrad – had been used in *The Billion Dollar Brain*. The new music, especially written for the film, although Richard Rodney Bennett's own, had a definite Shostakovich feel to it, and remember that Shostakovich himself was a prominent film composer in his time. The Main Theme is the most memorable piece, with a prominent piano part, which may or may not have had the composer as soloist, the record doesn't say. This very haunting theme



croops up throughout the soundtrack, especially haunting when its played on what can only be a musical saw, and conjures up memories of the Hayley Mills' film *Whistle Down the Wind*.

And now for a quiz. Who's the most prolific SF film score composer? John Williams and Jerry Goldsmith have to be in the running, but the highest scoring scorer could be James Horner. Initially coming to the fore with *Star Trek 2 – The Wrath of Khan*, he has since written the scores for *Krull*, *Brainstorm*, *Gorky Park*, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (unfortunately not released as an album). But before *Trek 2*, Horner wrote the music for another (lower budget) science fiction movie, *Battle Beyond the Stars*.

My first impression of the *Battle* score was that it sounded like the music to *Star Trek 2*, and though *Battle* may not have been the most memorable of SF films, it was fun and the soundtrack is equally enjoyable.

While on James Horner, the soundtrack albums of *Brainstorm* and *Gorky Park* have recently been sent to me, courtesy of That's Entertainment Records. TER, a relatively new label, are specialising in soundtrack records, and especially in the ones that probably otherwise would not have been issued, Japanese imports included. In the States, there is the Varèse Sarabande, which along with the other label, Citadel, appears to have started this outpouring of 'obscure' soundtrack re-

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cordings, and TER is continuing the trend in the UK.

Brainstorm a film fraught with problems, is probably James Horner's best known soundtrack to date. Interestingly the composer travelled to London to do the music score, and used The London Symphony Orchestra and the Ambrosian Singers for the recording. Phil Edwards, in his recent *Starburst* interview with James Horner has already dealt with the score to *Brain-*



storm, though I would like to add I feel the composer is getting better with every score he does, and *Brainstorm* is one of the best.

I've already set a precedent in this column, by mentioning *The Billion Dollar Brain*, so I have no compunction of dealing with *Gorky Park* as well. A British film, from an American writer, with a British screenplay writer; and set in the Soviet Union. But, thankfully, this score is not coyly Russian, though cleverly Horner uses a favourite sound

with many Soviet composers – the sound of bells – as a background and rhythm to many of the tracks.

I mentioned in a previous Record World that I still had to find a copy of the soundtrack to *Phantom of the Paradise*. I now have. The soundtrack is by the diminutive Paul Williams, who, just to confuse matters, plays the villain of the piece and spends most of his time stealing the music of the film's hero and exploiting it and him to his own ends. The soundtrack is a mixture of the film's songs, performed by Williams himself and a selection of the other stars, Bill Finley, who plays the Phantom, and Jessica Harper, his girlfriend. If any track could be said to be the theme song, it would presumably be "Faust (I was not myself last night)", which appears three times, once by the Phantom, once by Swan (Paul Williams) and lastly as a version called "Upholstery" performed by a sound-alike Beach Boys – The Beach Burns.



DISC DATA

mentioned during this month's record ramble:

The Final Countdown, composed by John Scott, East World/Tonite EMI, EWS 81303.
The Billion Dollar Brain, composed by Edward Rodney Bennett, conducted by Marjits Dods, United Artists, NAS 1342.
Battle Beyond the Stars, composed by James Horner, Rhino Records, RHSP 300.
Brainstorm, composed and conducted by James Horner, The London Symphony

Orchestra, Ambrosian Singers and The Choir of New College, Oxford. That's Entertainment Records, T H 1274.
Gorky Park, composed by James Horner, TER 1066.

Phantom of the Paradise, words and music by Paul Williams. A & M Records AMLS 6363.
The Star Wars Trilogy, composed by John Williams, performed by the Utah Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Varujan Kojian. TER 1067.

Thanks to David Stoner of That's Entertainment Records.

Ten tracks in all on the record, all in the slightly quirky Paul Williams's style and a good reminder of one of Brian De Palma's oddest films.

Lastly this month comes *The Star Wars Trilogy*, not from John Williams and the LSO, but from Varujan Kojian and the Utah Symphony Orchestra. Whether this is meant to be the definitive *Star Wars* Symphonic Suite I'm not sure. Personally, I don't think that it is. Basically it consists of new versions of established tracks from the film soundtracks, though with two additions. Side 1 features *A New Hope* (actually just called *Star Wars*), and *The Empire Strikes Back*, with three tracks each. Side two is devoted entirely to *The Return of the Jedi*, which is odd as there appeared to be less music overall in the third film than there was in the previous pair. This was emphasised by the fact that both of these films were available as double soundtrack

albums, while *Return* was only available as a single. However with *Return* you do get two pieces of music that were not available on the soundtrack album.

An eye-catching album cover, with art-work by Ron Russell and William Stout completes this, with a full back cover, mainly taken up with an appreciation of Williams's music by Kerry O'Starlog. The only fault with the cover is that the picture of Luke and his Landspeeder is printed the wrong way round as all Americans seem to presume that it must be a left-hand drive vehicle.

There is one bonus on this recording. At the very beginning, when you expect the opening crash of the main *Star Wars* theme, you get a drum roll first. No, it's not the National Anthem, it's Twentieth Century-Fox's opening fanfare – wide screen version of course. A very nice touch – the album is almost worth it for this piece alone. ■

KEEP ON TREKKIN' WITH STARBURST

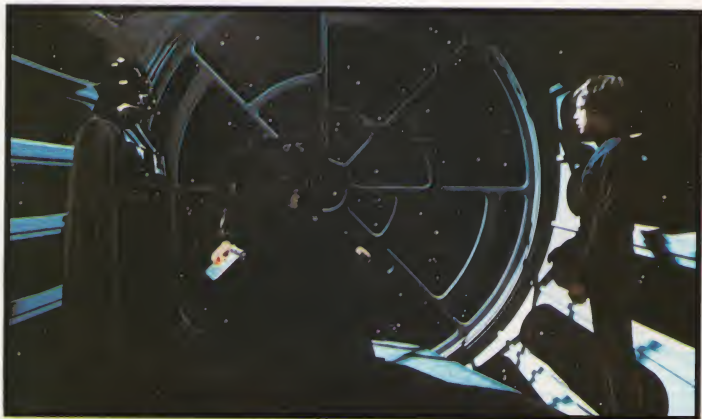
Watch out for the September issue of *STARBURST*, the Fantasy Filmgoers' Companion, in which we cover *Star Trek III – The Search for Spock*. Other colour features include:

- ★ An interview with *Last Starfighter* director, Nick Castle;
- ★ A report on Chris Tucker's amazing special effects for the new British horror fable, *Company of Wolves*;
- ★ A feature on the new high-tech thriller, *Blind Date*;
- ★ And an interview with the film's Greek director, Nico Mastorakis.

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The EMPEROR STRIKES BACK

— An interview with Ian McDiarmid
by Randy and Jean-Marc Lofficier

Starburst: Could you give us a brief resumé of your acting career?

Ian McDiarmid: I started off not intending to be an actor, but a clinical psychologist! I studied that for three years at St. Andrews University in Scotland, where I was born. In my third year, I realized that it really wasn't what I wanted to do at all. So, I gave it all up and set about acting. I eventually attended the Royal Scottish Academy of Dramatic Art. Then, I worked in various repertory theatres in England and Scotland and finally in the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Can you tell us about some of the other fantasy films that you've done?

Before *Jedi*, I had a small part in *Dragonslayer*. I was the first person to be savaged by the dragon, a priest called Brother Jacobus. That was great fun, because, just as in *Jedi*, it took a long time to kill me off—I mean technically. At that time, I was playing *Peer Gynt* on stage. They had to drag me out of rehearsals every now and again to try and kill me! This went on for months, and eventually, it got near to the opening night of *Peer Gynt*. So I said, "Please, will you kill me today, because I can't come back!" So, they did.

I've also been in a film called *The Awakening* with Charlton Heston, in which I played a psychiatrist, a return to my former roots. I had a scene with Stephanie Zimbalist Jr., who was great to work with, in which she came at me from behind, threw me down on the table, and a plunged syringe through my heart. We rehearsed this pumping motion, up and down, up and down, for a few days... that was another dynamic death!

How were you chosen for the part of the Emperor?

One day, I got this telephone call, and somebody said they were looking for someone to play the Emperor of the Universe! The casting director had seen me play an older part (that of Howard Hughes) with a lot of make-up in a play called *Seduced*, by Sam Shepard.

At that time, they were looking for somebody who was a bit younger to play older because the special effects and the make-up were rather strenuous. In fact, someone who looked exactly like the Emperor of the Universe auditioned just after I did! He was the right age and everything! It looked for a while as if he was going to play the part, but in the end it was decided that he was too frail.

Were you at all concerned that you had to play a role

where your face, which is really your trademark, was going to be covered up with heavy make-up?

I don't think so. It was very carefully explained to me, what the make-up would be. In fact, I saw pictures from *The Empire Strikes Back*. That was a combination of things which involved an old New York actress, some mask materials, and Clive Revill's voice. But since I'd seen that, I knew roughly what the Emperor was going to look like. They'd showed me drawings too. George assured me that I could keep my mouth and my nose and I was quite pleased about that! He also said my eyes would be mine but they would change the colour.

In a sense the make-up helped, because it suggested a person rather than someone who just ran things. It gave the part an added dimension, which is what I was really looking for. What was most interesting for me was to try and get hold of the Satanic side, in a broad, simple way. But maybe that's the easiest way to get hold of it...

What did you try to bring to the role, and how much freedom did you have to create the character?

Well, there was a very good and tight script by Larry Kasdan and George. You wouldn't have wanted to change it. And the scheduling of the film didn't leave

too much time for leeway. But, within that, I had complete freedom to create the character. I found the voice, which was a deepening of my own, and this slightly humorous interpretation, that now end again I was encouraged to go to.

Of course, if you're playing a part like the Emperor of the Universe, even if it's only for a few weeks, you're entirely surrounded by people making sure that you are as comfortable as possible. All these things actually help you to feel like an emperor, because emperors are served.

Was your voice mechanically altered when you did the dubbing?

They added things, like echo and reverb, and of course, it's in multi-track stereo. But they didn't do anything with the natural timbre of it. It was I who dropped it down. I spent a lot of time working on that in spite of the fact that I knew it was going to have to be done again at the dubbing stage. I first had to listen to Clive Revill's voice from the previous movie because, while I was allowed my own interpretation, if I had chosen a different pitch from him, people would have felt that something was wrong. So, I had to get in the rough area of his voice.

Did the aura of secrecy that usually surrounds a Star Wars film affect you in any way? Did you have all of the script?

No, I didn't. It was extraordinarily secret. I had to sign this document, which I suppose is like signing the Official Secrets Act! I quite liked all that! I think that helped the mystique. There were a lot of scripts going around, and you were never quite sure which ones were the actual ones. Occasionally they'd be changed. When I was able to get a script in the first place, I realized that it was the authorized version, but I only got my section of the film, which is unusual.

We were on the set one day, when Richard said, "Would you run through these lines for me before we shoot." I said, "Which lines?" He said, "You

know," and pointed them out to me. I'd never seen them before because I'd gotten the wrong script. But that only happened once.

Did the heavy make-up and flowing robes make all that physical action difficult for you?

Yes, I suppose so. It took four hours to do my face. I had to get up at half past three to get myself ready. Normally, you must go to bed early so you can look your best. Here, George said to me joking, "I want you to go to bed as late as possible, so you can get up looking your worst!" So, I did get up looking my worst, and I would crawl down to the car. At the studio, Nick Dudman, my make-up man, took over.

They just stretched and pulled my face about. Then, they covered it with gunk and added the latex, the rubber pieces and various other bits.

Meanwhile, somebody else was working on my hands, doing the same thing. Then, they put the lenses in. I didn't have to worry about my hair because of the cowl and the rubber dome on my forehead. I had very long hair at the time because of another part that I was doing, so it was tied up in a ribbon! The lenses were itchy, although they weren't painful. They had to be taken in and out between takes.

After you were made up, how was the rest of a typical day structured?

Well, I had to be ready by eight regardless. Some days I wasn't used at all, and I'd be sitting in my dressing room. I couldn't even go on the set and watch what was going on. I could read but eating was difficult. So, I just sat in my room, surrounded by mirrors. I saw this creature staring at me, so I had a good idea of what I looked like. It sounds very narcissistic to say so, but I was fascinated. I thought, "If I ever live to be a hundred fifty years old, I suppose that's how I would look. Because, the make-up was entirely based on the aging process. Was it an enjoyable experience working on the set? Richard Marquand has a lot of training in the theatre,

so he is very good with actors. And we had George on one side, reminding us of the strength of the stories, and looking after the technical details. So, it was ideal, really. I don't think I've had a happier time on a movie. Also, Mark Hamill is such a good actor that it was absolutely no problem to work with him. We had a complete rapport, on and off screen.

The first day on set was extraordinary. That's when we shot the hangar scene, where I come down the stairs to meet Vader. I walked into this room, in make-up for the first time, my eyes slightly hurting, and trying very hard to adjust to what was going on. I saw what looked like three thousand people and I said, "You didn't tell me. I thought it was going to be a quiet party for the three of us!"

Fortunately, all I had to do that day was walk down the ramp. I was taken up to this high scaffold, and they said we'd do one rehearsal. They pointed me in the direction, and suddenly there was steam and smoke. This ramp shot down, and all these people in red and black preceded me. Then, there was a voice, "Cue Emperor!" And down I hobbled. *Was there any sequence that was a problem to do?* I had to come back to do some reshooting on my "death". The precise handover moment when the dummy takes over from me was very difficult to do. I was on a harness and had to be lifted up by Dave Prowse! Once he let me go and I did actually go spinning around his head. I think they were rather sorry that they hadn't filmed that! That scene took a while, and George supervised it himself, because it was mainly a technical thing. I spent about three days being jerked about.

Was it difficult reacting to Dava Prowse's voice as Darth Vader, since the final version is dubbed in? I think that was one of the most difficult things. Not only was Dave's voice markedly different to James Earl Jones, but his rhythm is different too. So, Richard would say, "I think you have to imagine that he's taking longer to say that." You can do so much with the editing, sort of tightening up, but there's a lot that you can't do. Particularly on the reaction shots. So, I had to learn his lines as well as mine. *What were your reactions to the finished version of Jedi?*

When I saw it, I saw it with some kids that didn't believe that I was the Emperor of the Universe. I just couldn't be, they're minds couldn't take it. So, I took them to the first preview. For a while they were convinced it wasn't me, so that was no problem. Then, halfway through, they realized it must be true... At the end, they sort of sat there looking stunned and wouldn't speak to me or come near me! Now, whenever I meet them, they look at me as if I'm about to do something awful! I think they believe that all these years I've been masquerading and that I'm really the Emperor!

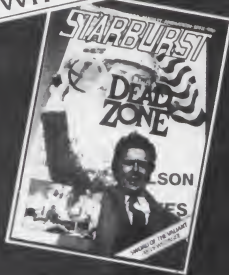
What was it like for you to not only become a part of something that has changed the cinema, but to come into an ensemble cast that has been together for seven years?

The whole thing was a bit nerve-racking from that point of view. As I'd said, I'd seen the two movies and thought they were great along with everybody else. To actually know I was going to be in one, and to play that part, who'd been discussed all the way through...

Yes, I supposed it was very awe-inspiring, but everyone was so great. I have a lot of admiration for George Lucas. I suppose I would say this as a matter of P.R., but it's absolutely true. I like him as a person. He's very serious and gentle. Also, these films are very well-intentioned. All right, they make a tremendous amount of money, and they appeal to kids, but they say good things and they say them in broad ways. I believe in that.



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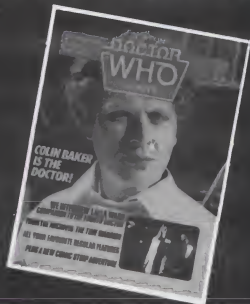
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It's Only A MOVIE

A Film Column by John Brosnan

It's beyond me why *Greystoke – the Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes* (and so on) has proved such a success here and in America. Its director, Hugh Hudson – the man who made running boring in *Chariots of Fire* – has turned a classic American pulp epic into a British white elephant. And "elephantine" is the best word to describe this over-inflated, misconceived production which has all the faults of current British film-making at its worst: what I term *Gandhi-itis*...

The first part of the film, set in the jungle, is okay if overlong: Rick Baker's ape costumes are marvellous and Albert Whitlock's scents are beautiful, but once the action switches to England the film takes a nose-dive. Tarzan is stripped of his mythic persona and all we're left with is a Jean Paul-Belmondo look-alike with an identity crisis. The expected, and hoped for, moment of catharsis when Tarzan finally rips off his shirt and unleashes his primal jungle power over the Victorian stuffed shirts who surround him never arrives. This long section of the film, in which Tarzan mopes around in a state of impotent angst, is more like *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* Meets *Brideshead Revisited*.

It's a badly constructed movie, both as a piece of drama and in terms of continuity. As far as drama is concerned the movie seems to be emotionally shapeless. It's only dramatic punctuation is a series of deaths and emotional farewells, some of which are combined. Tarzan has to bear the brunt of these scenes and I lost count of the apes/people he either said a tearful goodbye to or who died in his arms. Hudson and his writers seem to think that drama is a death scene drawn out as long as possible.

The lapses of continuity have been blamed on Warner Brothers who insisted on cutting the film considerably. For a change my sympathies are with the studio instead of the director. I couldn't have taken another hour of *Greystoke* without falling out of my tree (Hudson has said that only 20 minutes were cut but I have it on Good Authority that it was more like a whole hour).

No, I found *Greystoke* tedious in the extreme. Hudson, who judging from his interviews sounds a rather pretentious character, has turned Tarzan into a pretentious, pseudo-Art Movie. He claims that it is the first movie to be based on Edgar Rice Burroughs' original novel but I doubt if ol' ERB would

even recognise any connection much less applaud the result.



TWILIGHT TRIAL

Poor John Landis is being sent to trial for "involuntary manslaughter" as a consequence of the tragedy during the making of *The Twilight Zone* which claimed the lives of Vic Morrow and two children. During a recent interview Debra Hill (see page 20, this issue - Ed.) admittedly a friend of Landis's, told me she thought it was simply an accident and that no negligence was involved. To illustrate this she described a fatal accident she'd witnessed when working as a 2nd unit director on an action movie once; all the necessary safety precautions had been taken but the stunt just went wrong all the same.

I tend to agree with her, particularly as the *Twilight Zone* incident involved a helicopter. All aerial stunts are dangerous but as helicopters are such unpredictable, and unstable, machines, helicopter stunts are the most dangerous of all. For example, cameraman Randal Robinson who witnessed the *Twilight Zone* crash had



Above: Christopher Lambert broods over John Brosnan's comments on *Greystoke* – the Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes. Left: American model Andie McDowell as Jane.

only 3 months before seen three people killed in a helicopter crash during the making of the tv movie *Birds of Prey 2*.

Simply flying in a helicopter can be very risky, much less doing stunts with it. In 1978 William Girdler, director of *The Manitou*, was killed in a helicopter crash while location-scouting in the Philippines and last year a similar accident ended the promising career of Byron Kennedy, producer of the *Mad Max* films. His helicopter crashed into a lake in the Australian Outback during a location scout for *Mad Max 3*.

British film makers have had their share of helicopter mishaps too. From *Russia With Love* director Terence Young narrowly escaped death in 1963 when his helicopter plunged into the sea off Scotland during the filming. On another Bond, *You Only Live Twice*, aerial cameraman John Jordan had a foot severed by a rotor blade as he filmed the big helicopter battle sequence (a few years later he died when he fell out of a plane while working on *Catch 22*) and another aerial cameraman, Skeets Kelly, was killed in a helicopter crash in Ireland while shooting *Zeppelin* in 1970.

Most unlucky of all was director Boris Sagal (*The Omega Man* etc); he wasn't even in the helicopter that killed him – he was beheaded by a rotor blade during the making of the tv mini-series *World War 3* in 1981.

No, helicopters are definitely dangerous and John Landis has my every sympathy.

VIDEO NASTY CORNER

Here's a worrying thing; in reply to a request from the video trade that the government put back a clause into the Video Bill that would specifically limit the grounds on which videos could be refused a certificate to sex and violence only, the Junior Minister at the Home Office said: "There are other factors which the authority might reasonably wish to take into account. For example, they may consider that a video work was too horrific to be given a classification certificate, even though it did not deal with sex or violence."

Alarming words indeed. By leaving the definition of "horrific" so deliberately vague the government is giving their censors *carte blanche* to ban anything they don't particularly like. It won't be just the "video nasties" with their explicit gore like *Driller Killer* but any movie that is deemed "horrific" by some twit who considers himself qualified to make decisions on what other people should be allowed to see. Movies perhaps like *The Haunting?* *Repulsion?* *The War Game?* *The Sound of Music?*

Well, actually, in the case of *The Sound of Music* perhaps censorship isn't a bad thing... ■

THE A-Z OF ITALIAN FANTASY

Part One: From Argento to Jacopetti.



A Starburst Index by Alan Jones

This at-a-glance guide is the result of wading through the mountain of confusing, and confused, documentation that exists concerning the Italian fantasy genre of the last 25 years. Most inclusions were automatic due to the enormous amount of credits some people seemed to have accrued in this area, whether influential director, composer, B-movie star or technician. Others are personal choices and are included mainly because of their important impact on some part of the genre in the Latin cinema. Most dates of the film releases listed are the original Italian ones. Movie titles are mainly British, sometimes American, and Italian only where no alternative title exists or where applicable. This seemed to be the easiest approach to take. This glossary of facts and information is as accurate as I could make it considering nothing else seems to exist in the English language about what has been, and still is, one of the world's leading cinema industries.

It is dedicated to those readers who wrote saying that something like this was a long-overdue, good idea and to those of you I have met who urged me on and helped me in so many ways.

A

ARGENTO, Dario. What can one say about this king-pin of the Italian giallo/horror genre that hasn't been said a million times before, many times by me? His sense of cinematic style and fractured visual imagery is second to none. He was born in 1940 and in the early Sixties was the film critic of the Rome newspaper *Paese Sera*. His film career started when he was asked to do the storyboards, with Bernardo Bertolucci, for Sergio Leone's *Once Upon A Time In The West* and continued when he wrote the screen-



Left: John Phillip Law, wearing an outrageously camp costume, in *Danger: Diabolik* (1968), directed by Mario Bava. Above: *Diabolik* finds a perverse use for thousands of stolen bank notes that only his warped criminal mind could conceive. Below: The publicity art for Mario Bava's *La Baie Sanglante*.



plays for *Five Man Army*, *Today It's Me, Tomorrow You and Metti Una Sera A Cena*. His first film as a director was *The Bird With The Crystal Plumage* (1969) and it was such a commercial success that he hasn't stopped since. *Cat O'Nine Tails* (1970), *Four Flies On Grey Velvet* (1971), *Five Days of Milan* (1973), *Deep Red* (1975), *Suspiria* (1976), *Inferno* (1979), *Tenebrae* (1982, filmed under the counterfeit title of *Sotto gli occhi dell'assassino*). He produced George Romero's *Zombies: Dawn of the Dead* (1978) and directed two television features *The Tram* and *Eyewitness*. His version of *Frankenstein* was announced to the press a few years back but is still unrealised. He is at present preparing a film about voodoo for producer Dino De Laurentiis (The third part of the trilogy?) He is married to actress Daria Nicolodi (q.v.).

AVATI, Giuseppe. (Nicknamed Pupi). Born 3rd November, 1938. A producer, director and scriptwriter whose unusual work has yet to make it to Great Britain. His brother Antonio owns the Ama Film company that release his films and Antonio himself was often the star of his earlier work. Avati generally uses the same group of actors in each of his films and has been quoted as saying he is afraid of doing an all-out horror subject. *Balsamus L'Uomo Di Satana* (1970), *Blood Relations* (1972), *Thomas The Possessed* (1972), *La Mazurka Del Barone Della Ante E Del Fico Fiorone* (1975), *Bordella* (1976 in which Mario Bava had planned to create a disappearing man special effect), *The House with Windows that Laugh* (1976), *Tutti Defunti - Tranne i morti* (1977, an homage to Agatha Christie), *The Strange Visit* (1979, which some call his best film), *Help Me to Dream* (1981), *Dancing Paradise* (1982), *Zeder/ Voices in the Darkness* (1983). He directed two television films *Jazz Band* (1978), *Cinema* (1979) and co-scripted Lamberto Bava's *Macabre* (1980).

B

BAVA, Mario. (Pseudonyms: John Foam, John M. Old, Mickey Lion). Born San Remo, July 31st 1914. Died April 27th 1980. Unquestionably the most



Daria Nicolodi (wife of Dario Argento) in *Shock*

influential Italian genre director. His trend-setting style included such mannered tricks as abrupt cutting, an unrestrained use of the zoom lens and innovative use of colour. He is somewhat overrated as a director mainly because for every truly great film he has made there is always one that is abysmal. However, he is regarded in Italian horror circles as "The Master". He entered the industry as a second assistant, became an operator and finally a cameraman. His debut in this area in the genre was *The Devil's Commandment* (1956) for Riccardo Freda. Other notable cinematographic credits are *Hercules* (1957), *Hercules Unchained* (1958) and *Death Comes From Outer Space* (1958). As Freda and Jacques Tourneur regarded him as an expert in special effects work he also co-directed *The Giant of Marathon* (1959) and *The Wonders of Aladdin* (1961). His first film as a director is still his most praised *Revenge of the Vampire/Black Sunday* (1960). *Hercules in the Haunted World* (1961), *Fury of the Vikings* (1961), *The Evil Eye* (1962), *Night is the Phantom* (1963), *Black Sabbath* (1963), *Blood and Black Lace* (1964), *Planet of the Vampires* (1965), *Arizona Bill* (1965), *Curse of the Dead* (1966), *Knives of the Avenger* (1967), *Dr Goldfoot and the Girl Bombs* (1967), *Danger Diabolik* (1968), *Blood Brides* (1969), *Five Dolls for an August Moon* (1969), *Four Times This Night* (1970), *Roy Colt and Winchester Jack* (1970), *Bloodbath/Twitch of the Death Nerve* (1971), *Baron Blood* (1972), *Lisa and the Devil* (1973, pulled from release and retitled *House of Exorcism* with additional footage shot by Alfred Leone), *Wild Dogs* (1976), *The Evil Eye* (1977), *Shock* (1977), *The Venus of Ille* (1978, TV movie). In 1960 Bava produced *Seddok: Son of Satan* and in 1979 worked on the special effects in *Inferno*. It is commonly thought that at the time of his demise he was working on an adaptation of Kurt Vonnegut's "Venus on the Half Shell" to be called *The Space Vagabond* which was to have starred comedian Paolo Villaggio. Untrue, as he had turned the opportunity down to prepare *Baby Kong*.

BAVA, Lamberto. Mario's son found himself assisting his father on *Planet of the Vampires* (1965) at the age of 15 and worked on every one since, graduating to assistant director and co-writer of *Shock* (1977). Also assistant director on Argento's *Inferno* (1979), and *Tenebrae* (1982, where he had a walk-on part as a lift maintenance man) and Ruggero Deodato's films, most notably *Cannibal Holocaust* (1979). His first film as director was *Macabre* (1980). His second project *Gnoms*, for producer Ovidio G. Assonitis, fell through and was to have featured a special effects system perfected by his father for the television version of *The Odyssey*. His latest film started life as *Alkmaar*, became *The House with the Dark Staircase* and now sports the overseas title of *The Blade in the Dark* (1982). It is also available in a 5 episode television version. At one stage he and his father were planning a dual project to be called *Roots of Fear*. On the strength of *Macabre*, it would seem the spirit and legacy of the Bava name will indeed live on for still many years to come.



Top: A grave situation for Barbara Steele in *Revenge of the Vampire/Black Sunday* (1960). Above: Boris Karloff, who "sta red" in Mario Bava's *Black Sabbath* (1963). Below: A scene which will probably be "cut" for video from Lamberto Bava's *A Blade in the Dark* (1982).



BRASS, Tinto. Included here because of his troubled picture for Penthouse Productions, *Caligula* (1979), which proved there was big box-office in sordid slices of Roman history as long as they were liberally peppered with sex, gore and sadism. His debut in the genre seems to be with *Il Disco Volante* (1964) about a group of people abducted by Martians. *Salon Kitty* (1976) was another foray into man's seamier past, dealing as it did with Nazi Germany. His production of *Fanny Hill* was cancelled when a lesser company beat him to it. He is presently working on *The Key* (1983). The *Caligula* bandwagon still rolls on however, the more severely cut examples being *Caligula's Hot Nights* (1981) and *Caligula and Messalina* (1982). *Caligula's Slaves* (1983) is still to come.



CASSELLARI, Enzo G. (aka John Wilder). Workman-like, hack director whose recent prolific output earns him a place in this listing. Worked as an assistant director on films like *The Humanoid* (1978) until his directorial debut with *Love War in the Stars* (1978). *Stoneman* (1979), *Incubo Sulla Citta* (1979), *Shark* (1981), *Bronx Warriors* (1982), *Adam and Eve* (1982), *Year 2000-Hercules in New York* (1982), *The New Barbarians* (1982), *White Death* (1983), *Tuareg* (1983), *Forced to Fight* (1983), *Escape from the Bronx* (1983). He often appears in his own films under the name Enzo Girolami.

CIPRIANI, Stelvio. A composer whose music is often the best part of the movie. *Luana, Virgin of the Jungle* (1968), *Bloodbath* (1971), *The Cursed Medalion* (1975), *Tentacles* (1976), *Piranha II: Flying Killers* (1982), *Sword of the Barbarians* (1982), *The House with the Yellow Carpet* (1983).

COZZI, Luigi. Born Milan, 7th September 1947. Cozzi is proof that, more often than not, film critics who turn director usually make the type of film that they wouldn't have normally sat through in their critical days. In 1965 he was editor of *Galaxy* magazine and has been at some time and another Italian correspondent for both *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and *L'Ecran Fantastique* magazines. His own magazine *Stella*, made its debut in 1979. He set up a distribution company in Rome and released *Silent Running* (1972) as 2002: A Second Odyssey in Dolby and a Sensurround process called Futuround. Another of his successes was the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* which was rereleased in stereo. He has written a novel called "Island of the Golden Spiders" and is always in great demand on Italian television whenever there is a discussion about the genre. His first television film was *The Tunnel Under the World* (1969) followed by *Il Ragno* (1970). Argento produced his tv movie *Il Vicino Di Casa* (1973) which was remade for the cinema as *The Murderer must Kill Again* (1975). Then *La Morte E Come Un Ragno* (1974), *Stella* (1976), *Starcrash* (1979), *Contamination* (1980, extra added blood and gore scenes for US release), *Hercules* (1982), *The Seven Magnificent Gladiators* (1982), *The Adventures of Hercules* (1983). Cozzi, also known as Lewis Coates, co-wrote Argento's *Four Flies On Grey Velvet* (1971) and has also dabbled in sex films. He says that all his films contain homages to favourite genre classics. His unrealised pet project is *Atlantide*.



left: George Eastman disembowels himself in a gutsy scene from *Anthropophagus/The Grim Reaper* right: A splitting headache for this victim of *Anthropophagus 2* (with an apt alternative title of *Absurd*)



D'AMATO, Joe. (Real name: Aristide Massaccesi. Pseudonyms: Richard Franks, Peter Newton, David Hills, John Franklin, Steven Benson, Kevin Mancuso). To borrow a phrase from Bill Landis' *Sleazoid Express* - a portrait of the artist as scum of the earth. Can any other director be as bad as D'Amato? His non-existent plot constructions and basic lack of artistry mean his films really only appeal to the lowest common denominator. He started as a cameraman at 17 in the 1950s (*The Antichrist*, 1954) and was responsible for initiating the *Black Emmanuelle* series in the mid Seventies which made a star out of a talentless oriental girl Moira Chen who changed her name to Laura Gemser. His first film as director was *La Morte Sorride All'Assassino* (1973) followed by *Dario Di Una Vergine Romana* (1973), *The Revolt of the Virgins* (1973), *Emmanuelle* and the *Last Cannibals* (1977), *Blue Holocaust* (1979) which featured actual dead bodies in some scenes, *Exotic Love* (1979) his first pornographic film although he usually used the name Charles Borsky in this field, *Island of the Zombies* (1979), *Anthropophagus/The Grim Reaper* (1980), *Absurd/Anthropophagus 2* (1981), *Caligula the Untold Story* (1982), *Ator the Fighting Eagle* (1982), *Ator the Invincible* (1982), *Endgame* (1982), *Shock Waves* (1982), 2020: *Texas Gladiators* (1983).

DEODATO, Ruggero. (Pseudonyms: Roger Franklin, Roger Deodato). The man who started the craze for cannibal films also has the honour of creating the best, *Cannibal Holocaust* (1979) which was subse-

quently banned in Italy when Deodato was asked by the authorities to prove that the special effects were indeed just that. He couldn't. And this is precisely why his films work as he creates unbearable tension by letting us expect the worst and then actually allowing it to happen. His directing career is a little hazy but he made *One's Born a Man, One Dies a Policeman*, *Los Gamines* and a *Last House on the Left* rip-off called *The House on the Edge of the Park* which starred the same male lead, David Hess. *Cannibal* (1976), *The Concorde Affair* (1979), *Cannibal Holocaust* (1979) and because that was such a big hit in Japan he is now working on the sequel *Cannibal Fury* (1983) plus *The Atlantis Interceptors* (1983). Unrealised projects are *Voodoo Revenge* purportedly to be a history of the zombie, and *Mushrooms Under Manhattan*. He is quoted as saying he prefers realism in his films than fantastic horror.

DONAGGIO, Pino. Born 1941. The most important post-Morriconne composer, Donaggio studied the violin at the age of ten and to this day credits Vivaldi, Chopin and Beethoven as his major influences. He has had a number of Top Ten hits in Italy one of which, "You don't have to say you love me", was recorded by Dusty Springfield in 1966. His major work has been for director Brian De Palma. Don't Look Now (1973), *Corruption in the Halls of Justice* (1974), *Carrie* (1976), *Black Venetian* (1978), *China 9 Liberty 37* (1978), *Piranha* (1979), *Tourist Trap* (1979), *Home Movies* (1980), *Dressed to Kill* (1980), *The Black Cat* (1980), *Blow Out* (1981), *The Fan* (1981), *Beyond Evil* (1981), *The Howling* (1981), *Taxi* (1982), *Hercules* (1982), *The Adventures of Hercules* (1983), *Jugando con la Muerte* (1982), *Oltre La Porta* (1982), *Street of Mirrors* (1983).

E

ERCOLE. The Italian name for Hercules whose mythic legends were the start of a craze for sand and sandal epics, called "peplum", that lasted for nearly a decade back in the late '50s/early '60s. It is safe to say that most of these films were dire in the extreme, especially those at the end of the cycle that cut both corners and budgets and despite their advertising claims, rarely achieved any thrills at all apart from cheap and nasty ones. Now the "peplum" have become fashionable again spearheaded by Luigi Cozzi's *Hercules* (1982) but on the strength of this offering the new wave is already doomed from the start. Often, although Hercules' name was in a title, he seemed to be masquerading as Maciste, Samson and Goliath as well. Actors who have played Hercules are: Alan Steel, Mark Forest, Steve Reeves (who retired in 1971 and now lectures on body-building in the US), Kirk Morris, Brad Harris, Lou Ferrigno, Ed Fury, Dan Vadis/Reg Park (who still appears, mostly in Clint Eastwood movies), Samson Burke, Lang Jeffries, Gordon Scott, Gerard Tichy and Rock Stevens (whose real name is Peter Lupus of *Mission Impossible* fame). As a general rule, if a film stars Reeves, Brad Harris or Dan Vadis/Reg Park it is usually worth a look. Otherwise forget it. *Hercules* (1957), *Hercules Unchained* (1959), *Goliath and the Dragon* (1960), *Hercules in the Haunted World* (1961), *Hercules and the Captive Women* (1961), *The Fury of Hercules* (1961), *Conquest of Mycene* (1963), *Hercules the Invincible* (1963), *Hercules Against the Sons of the Sun* (1964), *Hercules Against Rome* (1964), *Samson and the Mighty Challenge* (1964), *Hercules, Samson and Ulysses* (1964), *Hercules against the Barbarians* (1964), *Hercules against the Moon Men* (1964), *Hercules and the Titans of Babylon* (1965), *Hercules* (1982), *Hercules* (2000) (1982), *The Adventure of Hercules* (1983).



Macho man! Steve Reeves as the most famous Hercules

F

FENECH, Edwige. Popular, "Fantasy Female" actress who divides her career between horror and generic sex comedies. *Five Dolls for an August Moon* (1969), *Next!* (1971), *Erotic Blue/Why those strange drops of blood on the body of Jennifer?* (1972), *Excite Me!* (1972), *They're Coming to Get You* (1975), *Doctor Jekyll & Gentle Signora* (1980), *Ideal Adventure* (1982), *Don't Play with Tigers* (1982).

FREDA, Riccardo. (Pseudonym: Robert Hampton). Born Egypt, 24th February 1909. He was a sculptor, painter and art critic until he entered the film industry with a co-written genre script *Lasciate ogni speranza* (1937) and a year later co-directed his first film. He beat Hammer in the Gothic horror stakes with *I Vampiri/The Devil's Commandment* in 1956 in which he also appears. He added taste and refinement to all his films no matter how unpalatable, or badly written, the subject matter was. And although sadism and torture was often just around the corner, he never stooped to the level of cheap shock until his more recent efforts. Like Mario Bava, a very influential figure in the shaping of the Italian fantasy film. *Caltiki the Immortal Monster* (1959), *The Giants of Thessaly* (1960), *The Witch's Curse* (1960), *Samson and the 7 Miracles of the World* (1961), *The Terror of Dr Hitchcock* (1962), *The Spectre* (1963), *The Exter-*

minators (1965, and one of the first films to feature the literary character Coplan), *Puzzle of Horrors* (1968), *Two Little Orphan Girls* (1968), *Coplan Opens Fire in Mexico* (1972), *Superhuman* (1979) *Unconscious/Murder Obsession* (1980).

FRIZZI, Fabio. Composer son of producer Fulvio Frizzi whose co-written music for *Zombie Flesheaters*, with Giorgio Tucci, must be the most popular of recent years with genre fans. And still it is unavailable on record. Like *Zombie Flesheaters* (1979), his major work has been for films directed by Lucio Fulci and produced by his father, *City of the Living Dead* (1980), *The Beyond* (1981) and *Manhattan Baby/Possessed* (1982). He has recently had a 45 single released in Italy called *Vieni Avanti Cretino*. Fabio Frizzi is not to be confused with Claudio Frizzi who wrote the music, along with Vincenzo Tampera and Fabio Bixio, for Fulci's *The Psychic* (1976), the re-release of *Godzilla* (1955) and *The Last Jaws* (1979). Fabio Frizzi is now very prolific, his latest is *The Etruscan Enigma* (1982).

FULCI, Lucio. Born in Rome 27th June, 1917. Efficient technical director whose art would seem to be accidental but whose staggering output of the last five years has earned him the title of the new Master of Terror. He doesn't like working with stars, feels

that tension is all important and admits that all his films are pessimistic mainly because of his attitude to life and the emotional blows it has dealt him. He started out as an assistant director on films like *Uncle as a Vampire* (1959) and began directing various films like *The Maniacs* (1962), *Secret Agents 002* (1964), *002: Moon Mission* (1965), and various spaghetti-westerns. *Perversion Story* (1968), *Beatrice Cenci* (1969, his favourite film), *A Lizard in a Woman's Skin* (1970) which sported the working title of *Don't Torture the Duckling*, *The Long Night of Exorcism* (1972), *Four for the Apocalypse* (1975), *The Psychic* (1976), *Zombie Flesheaters* (1979), *City of the Living Dead* (1980), *The Beyond* (1980), *The Black Cat* (1980), *The House by the Cemetery* (1981), *The New York Ripper* (1982), *Manhattan Baby/Possessed* (1982), *Conquest/Mace* (the Outcast) (1982). He is currently working on these projects, *Enigma*, 2033: *The Fighter Centurions*, *Rome 21st Century: Ben Hur vs Spartacus and Blastfighters*. Films announced with his name as director are *Sword of Siegfried*, *Contamination Atomic Project* and *The Mummy*, which supposedly Jeff Lieberman took over but which he has yet to make. Like Hitchcock, Fulci always makes a cameo appearance but in the case of *The Black Cat* it was cut out of the release prints. And *Zombie 3D* has just been announced.

G

Goblin. Techno-rock group who shot to fame when they scored Dario Argento's *Suspiria* (1976). Argento had wanted Deep Purple to score *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* (1971) and pursued this avenue of thought when he asked Goblin to write the music for *Deep Red* (1975). Argento himself collaborated in the writing of the *Suspiria* score as he wanted to film the action with his cast listening to the music. The Goblin line-up has, at one stage or another, consisted of Massimo Morante, Claudio Simonetti, Fabio Pignatelli, Agostino Marangolo and Maurizio Guarini. Goblin wrote a score to accompany George Romero's *Martin* (1978) under the title of *Wampir* that featured selections from the album 'Roller'. Likewise with Richard Franklin's *Patrick* (1978). *Zombies: Dawn of the Dead* (1978), *Blue Holocaust* (1979, not available on record), *Contamination* (1980), *Amo Non Amo*, *Squadra Antigangsters* and the theme for the television series *Sette Storie per non dormire*. Under the name of Libra they scored *Shock* (1977) and a compendium of their greatest hits was used in *Zombie Creeping Flesh* (1980). More recently Morante, Simonetti and Pignatelli did the music for *Tenebrae* (1982). An odd, 1979 Goblin album, "Volo", shows a completely different musical direction than the one they are now famous for. Simonetti has just scored Lucio Fulci's *Conquest* (1982) and *The New Barbarians* (1982).

H

HOLOCAUST 2000 (1977). A film that was shot on a tight schedule at Twickenham studios. It starred Kirk Douglas, Simon Ward, Anthony Quayle and Virginia McKenna in a story inspired by *The Omen* (1976) and was a classic example of a good cast struggling valiantly against a pathetic script that threatened to sink them at any moment. It introduces us to one of



the most ham-fisted producers working in Italy - Edmondo Amati. He produced *A Lizard in a Woman's Skin* (1971), *When Women Played Ding Dong* (1971), *The Antichrist* (1974), *The Living Dead at the Manchester Morgue* (1974) and *Return to Atlantis* (1977). He didn't just make bad films in Italy, Spain suffered too with *The Horrible Sexy Vampire* (1970). Although still active in the industry, *Shark* (1981) and its up-coming sequel *White Death* (1983), he seems to have handed over most of his producing chores to relations Maurizio and Sandro who, amongst others, produced *Cannibal Apocalypse* (1980).



Above: A character from fabulous Fulci's *City of the Living Dead* (1980). Left: The cast of *Holocaust 2000*, led by Kirk Douglas, struggle valiantly against a pathetic script.

I

I VIAGGIATORI DELLA SERA. A film made in 1980 that proved how worthwhile home-grown futuristic fantasy can be in Italy. Intelligent, moving, disturbing, funny and scary are all adjectives very rarely used by critics when describing the usual output of the Italian exploitation industry but these are all applicable in the case of *I Viaggiatori Della Sera*. Ugo Tognazzi was the director as well as the lead actor. He had directed before, most notably *The Seventh Floor* (1966), but became universally recognised as an actor when he appeared in *La Cage aux Folles*. Taken from a novel by Umberto Simonetta, Tognazzi's film painted a view of the future similar to that portrayed in *Logan's Run*, where the elderly are sent on enforced holidays to special villages in resort areas. Everybody has to eventually play a sinister game, using cards depicting their past, and the losers are sent on a supposed sea voyage that no-one ever returns from. The story centres on Tognazzi's non-adjustment to his new environment and the problems it causes in his marital relationship. When his wife loses at cards he finds he has nothing left to live for except a hope in a group of dissidents planning an escape but he hasn't taken into consideration his grandson, one of the new wave of politically minded sub-teens given the vote at 13. The film has so many memorable touches, not least of which is the aged shown as Fiorucci-wearing eccentrics still clinging onto the last vestiges of their alternative lifestyle. An exceptional film - and a memorable one.

J

JACOPETTI, Gualtiero. Who, with Franco Prosperi, caused a worldwide sensation in the '60s and gave birth to the term "shockumentary". *Mondo Cane* (1961) started it all which was a grab-bag of documentary footage featuring cruelty to animals, actual killings and weird tribal rituals. Mistaking its sleaziness for committed filmmaking, the film won two David Donatello awards. It opened the floodgates for even more horrendous footage packaged under the guise of social concern. Other Jacopetti/Prosperi features were: *Mondo Cane 2* (1962), *Mondo Cane 3* (1963), *Women of the World* (1963), *Africa Addio* (1965), and *Uncle Tom* (1971). All were heavily censored in this country especially when a scandal hit the release of *Africa Addio* as the two filmmakers were accused of actually staging the killing of a prisoner by a policeman themselves. Rip-offs of this ground-breaking format pioneered by Jacopetti and Prosperi were made throughout the Sixties and Seventies and are still being made today, ie, *Sweet and Savage* (1983) co-produced by *Mondo Cane*'s photographer Antonio Climati. While Jacopetti seems to have disappeared off the Italian film scene, Franco Prosperi is still as prolific as ever. Under the name of Frank Shannon he has four films to be released, *Wild Beasts* (1982), *Throne of Fire* (1982), *Gunan King of the Barbarians* (1983) and *Terror Town* (1983).

The conclusion to The A-Z of Italian Fantasy will appear next month when Alan Jones covers K-Z. Be here!

Tony Crawley's THINGS TO COME

two (or is it three) Oscars, was beaten by Kaufman's man, Jay Boekelheide.

Fret not, skywalkers. *Jedi* rated one Oscar, the Special Visual Effects nod, awarded by the Academy's governors and not voted upon, went to Richard Edlund (his ILM swansong before joining Trumbull), Dennis Muren, Ken Ralston and Phil Tippet.

The real zinger of the evening was a San Franciscan named Randy Thom. Like Bobby Duval, Randy just could not lose. . . . In the Best Sound department, Kaufman's four guys off Lucas' four, plus the quartets from *WarGames*, *Never Cry Wolf* and *Terms of Endearment*. Randy, however, was nominated thrice over — being among the sound crews for Kaufman, Lucas and their pal Carroll Ballard's *Never Cry Wolf*!

Bond 14

Some of the Broccoli-Bond clan were after my head some time ago when I said that Cubby's step-son, Michael G. Wilson, would produce all future Bonds. After exec-producing *Moonraker*, *For Your Eyes Only* and *Octopussy*, Michael Wilson will co-produce the next, August Bond shoot, in harness with Cubby. Wilson has also written the script (with 007 veteran Richard Maibaum) and to celebrate, perhaps, his new status, *From a View to a Kill* is likely to be the first Bond to change its title from the original Fleming. Well, hell, not even Michael Jackson and Quincy Jones can come up with a song called that!

Dead and Alive!

Now that the smoke has cleared and the wounds are bandaged, the surprise result of *The Battle of the Living Dead* is that George Romero has lost and Tom Fox can call his film, *The Return Of The Living Dead*.

The battle began, you might recall, about this time last year at the Cannes festival where producer Tom Fox was busily announcing Tobe Hooper as director of a 3-D horrorshow quite shamelessly ripping off what to most people, inside or out of our genre, was Romero's trademark. What particularly incensed Romero and his partner in Laurel Entertainment, Richard Rubenstein, was that the Fox film was scripted by John Russo, co-writer of that cult from '68, *Night of The Living Dead*. And it wasn't the first time Russo had attempted to cash in on past glories. The Laurel boys yelled foul — it was unfair to muddy the public by making a non-Romero film, sound exactly like a Romero film.



Let us forget. *Romancing the Stone* helmer Bob Zemeckis is set to film the movie version of *The Shadow*. The who? *The Shadow* was the most popular fictional character of the Thirties and Forties, created by Walter B. Gibson

Gentlemen both, Romero and Rubenstein decided not to go to court but to the Motion Picture Association of America which, among other things, controls movie titles and makes sure one doesn't appear to be another. For instance, the MPAA only recently upheld my pal Chuck Vincent's complaint that Cannon's *The Last American Preppy* and *The Unofficial Preppy Movie* were stealing the name and worth of his *Preppies* comedy. Not so in Romero's fight, though. Bearing in mind, no doubt, that George's continuing trilogy went on with *Dawn of the Dead* and that the finale, *Day of the Dead*, is about to roll, the MPAA okayed Fox's use of "Living Dead" in his title.

It may be some small comfort to George that the film — co-financed by Britain's Hemdale combine — is now re-written by Dan O'Bannon and he'll also make his directing debut with the project (and not in 3-D anymore, of course). Richard Rubenstein, however, intends keeping an eye on the film's future hype. If he feels the Romeroesque confusion is increased, he'll strike again.

Romero Writes

While Rubenstein handles the business — and the rips — George Romero has been finishing the final drafts of his scripts for *Creepshow II* and *Day of the Dead*. Now he's hunting up a director for the new collection of old and new, published and unpublished Steve King short horror tales, due for shooting this summer — far from Romero's usual neck of the woods. Pittsburgh, after all, is reserved for the October start on the end of the trilogy . . . which, of course, Romero is definitely directing.

And a third Laurel production is ready for the off, too. This is *The Sisterhood* suspense, based on Michael Palmer's shock novel about a Boston hospital. This is the first Romero project to be funded by a Hollywood studio — Warner Brothers.

There is a slim possibility that *The Master* will helm it, himself, after *Day of the Dead*.

And George's *Twilight Zone*-ish tele-series, *Tales From the Dark Side*, has won full backing at last, from the Lexington Broadcast Service Company of New York, which hypes itself as "America's leading television syndication network." Shooting will begin in the autumn. The shows are not aimed at any of the big three US networks but at the less finickety local stations — and the Beeb or ITV, of course. Romero has written some scripts but as he's made it known he aims to give new directors their break with the shows, he's becoming inundated by scenarios from writers who want to direct as well. It remains to be seen how many of them can . . .

The Shadow

Another reason why Spielberg-fund Robert Zemeckis dropped *Cocoon* swiftly picked up by *Splash*'s Ron Howard — is that Bob will helm the movie version of the old pulp magazine and radio serial, *The Shadow*. No stars are set yet apart from the Mexican actor-director Alfonso Arau — one of the baddies in *The Wild Bunch*. Zemeckis appears to think of Arau as his rabbits-foot. He found roles for Arau in *Used Cars* and *Romancing The Stone*. Bob's script is not from his partner of old, Bob Gale, but the female half of the *Superman* scribes, Leslie Newman.

Avenue One

Coppola and John Sayles find, Vincent Spano, heads the street gang cast of *Alphabet City*, just completed by Amos Poe. Familiar title, huh? You bet. That's why Paul Morrissey's futuristic *Alphabet City* had to change to *New York, Avenue D*. Never thought much of that title. Nor did Paul. So his film is now *Down Town*. Petula Clark wouldn't recognise it, that's for sure.

If It's Friday. . .

. . . it must be the 13th. It was in April, of course, which was the kick-off date for *Friday The 13th — The Final Chapter*, allegedly the last in the bloody tales of Crystal Lake. Whether it is depends on the box-office. So far the series has pulled in \$31.5 million; No 1 remains the champ, though *III-D* came close to matching it.

Just how or why the Crystal Lake camp remains open is beyond me but it is and as the film's first line has it, "I don't want to scare anyone, but Jason is still out there." He sure is. By the end of 91 minutes hardly anyone else is. They're dispatched by everything to hand that is sharp and/or pointed from hacksaw to harpoon . . . not forgetting the surgical blade which enters a nurse's sternum and proceeds to gut her completely. Joseph Zito directed and Tom Savini handled the effects — didn't he, though? Only guy to have worked on all four *Fridays* is composer Harry Manfredini.

If It's Miner. . .

So why didn't Steve Miner continue the *Friday* saga where he left off on the last two. Steve is otherwise engaged as they say. He's working on his summer-time re-make of *Godzilla* or *Gajira* as the Japanese spell it (They should know. They invented the beastie in 1955). The re-tread is being made by Kings Road Productions which may sound British but isn't. A newish Hollywood outfit already responsible for backing the *Enemy Mine* sci-fi project in Iceland and Bill Forsyth's *Comfort and Joy*. That's called spreading your risk.

Lights. . .!

Steven Spielberg and his No 2 music-man, Jerry Goldsmith, have bit parts in *Gremlins*. Or did Joe Dante's Spielberg production is being swiftly re-cut. Not funny enough at first sneaks . . . Peter Gabriel supplies the *Gremlins* song. Oh, er, did . . . Tim Curry and *Tin Drum* kid David Bennett have joined Tom Cruise and new gal Mia Sara in Ridley Scott's *Legend* at Pinewood . . . Jim Henson has come up with the Alice in Wonderlandish creatures for *Dreamchild*. . . Anton Furst, part of the *Alien* and *Flash Gordon* art teams promoted to full production designer on Neil Jordan's *Company of Wolves* . . . Next if telly treat (?) from the Americas is *Vanguard*, set in L.A. 1999 (using Ridley's old sets?) and all about this "high-tech adventure of a soldier of fortune and his beautiful android." Well that's what it says here . . . Dario Argento's *Tenebrae* finally opened in America, so get this . . . *Unsane* . . . insane, isn't it?

Frank 'n' Stein 'n' Missus

Frankenstein is the flavour of the month. Up in Leeds, John Sichel has been directing a tv version of the ill-fated 1981 Broadway play. Robert Powell was the good/bad doctor with David Warner as his creation and Sir John Gielgud and Carrie Fisher thrown in to please American audiences. In Paris, the Peter Sellers lookalike Jean Rocheforte has the lead in *Frankenstein '90* with rocker Eddy Mitchell as his monster and the fresh French femme, Fiona Gelin.

As we went to press, no lady had been announced for Stelling's re-tread of the other Mary Shelley book, *The Bride* (of we-all-know-whom). Sting is all signed up and Franc Roddam (who started *Sting* off in *Quadrophania*) will direct. The result should not be confused with *The Bride of Munich*, directed by Israeli Nadahl Levitan. That also provided work for British actors—Rosemary Leach and John Grillo—but has nothing to do with Mary Shelly, nor James Whale.

Ending Begins

Although one overly harsh Munich critic commented, "Is this what the fuss was all about?" West Germany's biggest (and first modern fantasy) movie has finally opened. This is the film of Michael Ende's book, *The Never Ending Story*—directed by *The Boat's* Wolfgang Petersen, with effects safely in the British mitts of Brian Johnson. It's about \$28 million of West German expertise and is, I'm told looking damned good. Audiences couldn't get enough of it, anyway. When it opened on some 230 screens through the Fatherland, the people and money—more than a million bucks—poured in and had the movie beating *E.T.*'s opening three days record. I hope to see the film—or some of it—during the current Cannes circus and will, natch, report back.

20th Century S.F. ox

Working hard on filling that fantasy film vacuum noticeable on Oscar night is, perhaps, the home of sf in Hollywood. 20th Century-Fox, the one company that took a chance on *Star Wars* while all around them every smart-alec executive thumbed it down, is gambling on more of the same. The studio has two fantasy trips already before cameras—*Enemy Mine* and *Cocoon*. *The Marvel* (and not as I think I misreported, *Marble!*) of *Haunted Castle* begins shortly and Fox has bought *Dreamscape* for America.

That ain't all. In various stages of development are *Star Staff*, *Green Lantern*, *Alien*, *Ola*, ohm, two films of *The Improbable Adventures of Baron Munchausen* and, so I'm reliably informed, a little thing entitled... *Alien II*. All hail Fox, right? Right!

Camera...!

George Lucas and Dale Pollock have been landed with a hefty libel suit as a result of certain comments by George in the *Skywalking* book about the merchandising of *Star Wars* toys. Someone is very miffed...

Richard Greenburg's New York company have wrapped up their effects for Richard Donner's *Ladyhawke* and everything should be put together in time for a Christmas opening over there. In America, special clip-compilations on cassette are now being sold with sub-titles for the deaf...

Same goes, believe it or not, for porno cassettes. Amazing country... Britain's prosthetics king, Chris Tucker—*Elephant Man*, *Quest for Fire*, *Dune*—spent \$600,000 in changing men into *The Company of Wolves*... Yet another ex-porno director, Roberta Findlay, into horror with *The Oracle*... John Badham taken over *American Flyer* from Peter Yates

Mutant Makers

With *Mutant* out of the editing rooms—it's a right old creepy if concerned with today's scourge of the dangers of toxic and nuclear wastes—producer Igo Kantor has formed a new production shop, Laurelwood, and is rushing into seven movies. Two of them will be made by *Mutant's* director, the ex-stunter-actor-gaffer-special-effectician-production manager-oh-everything-man, John "Bud" Cardos. (He also made *The Dark and Kingdom of Spiders* with Igo). Bud's films will be shot down Mexico way: *Deadly Encounter* and then he has Sybil Danning chasing *The Most Dangerous Man in the World*.

The Austrian born, Portugal-raised Kantor, who used to be a music editor at Columbia, has \$28 million to spend on his first Laurelwood efforts. The first one started in New Zealand in July—*Shaker Run*.

Sligh Park

Trouble for the Salkinds. Before they can get their *Santa Claus* in front of the

cameras, the French have finished a musical fantasy called *I Met Santa Claus*. Shooting took place in the Finnish snows with this, oh, real adorable youngster making the long trek to the North Pole to get the old fellow's help in finding his parents who'd gone astray in Africa someplace.

That's only the half of it. The very company which will release the Salkinds' Christmas card movie in America has now backed a creepy number called *Slay Ride*. *Santa Claus* would have been better. Subject: A Santa on the rampage in Utah with a sack full of exceedingly sharp implements. Director: Charles E. Sellier, Jr, who cut his teeth working on *Hangar 18* and *Mysterious Monsters*.

The Salkinds can relax about West Germany's *Snow Man*, though. He's a pusher of t'other kind of snow...

Going, Going...

Hammer Films old home has gone on the sales block. Bray Studios has been snapped up by the Samuelson Group which provides cameras and the like for movie-making all over Europe—the U.S. too. Now they can offer five sound-stages to use their equipment in. Only three stages are sound-proofed. Maybe someone wants to make a silent movie. Or use them for SFX work.

Open Again

Dino De Laurentiis has re-opened his DinoCitta studios in Rome to house his *Ren Sonja* project—and Richard Fleischer's new Dino sf item, *Total Recall*. That's not enough to fill 17 stages though. No doubt Broccoli and the Salkinds will move in thanks to the recent Budget tax changes which has them and other film-makers wanting to use our studios scurrying around for other sites in a hurry.

& Akkk-shun!

Just when the video boom was wottering a bit, Michael Jackson has given the British business a shot in the arm. The vid about the making of *Thriller* is outselling *Raiders*... And you can get *Thriller* in 3-D soon, via seven still photos of the latest View-master zaike gimmick... Larry Cohen working like a maniac—or about to be? Before the emulsion could dry on *Blind Alley*, he knocked off *Special Effects*, then he will release both. Best bet, the *Smithereens* guys, is the only one of the cast of newcomers in such flicks. Apparently unimpressed by the failure of that something-wotter thing, they went way west. Jack Jackson's *Thriller* was made in the autumn of 1982. It's the only one of the cast of newcomers in such flicks. Apparently unimpressed by the failure of that something-wotter thing, they went way west. Jack Jackson's *Thriller* was made in the autumn of 1982. It's the only one of the cast of newcomers in such flicks.



Above: Trouble At Mill. Wings Hauser (no, honest) and Jody Medford facing up to *Mutant*, latest endeavour from John "Bud" Cardos, director of *The Dark and Kingdom of Spiders*. All three were produced by Igo Kantor who has lately formed a new combine for more of the same with Bud—one of Hitchcock's little helpers on *The Birds*. Below: Michael Jackson (centre) with assorted ghoulies from *Thriller*, whose Making of video may still be outselling *Raiders*.



Starburst Review Section

FRIDAY THE 13TH THE FINAL CHAPTER

"Still manages to shock"
A Starburst Film Review
by Alan Jones

Jason's back – and he's as demonic and superhuman as you could possibly hope for. Only this time he seems to have acquired the ability to be in about five different places at the same time!

There's not much more anyone can say on the subject of this series. *Friday the 13th – The Final Chapter* is more of the same in every department. The plot is the usual negligible blue-print, the sex-obsessed teens interchangeable, and the murders are dubious twists on all the old favourites. We get that reminder thanks to the memory jogging prologue that recaps scenes from *Parts 1, 2 and 3*.

Stripped of the 3D gimmick that made *Part 3* so successful, make-up genius Tom Savini is back on the crew this time which means the body count not only continues but gets an extra added dimension of charnel-house nausea. How fitting then that the first atrocity is committed in a hospital morgue where the mistakenly dead Jason has been put on ice. *The Final Chapter's* first five minutes begin with a subtle hint of necrophilia, blunders on with a tacky seduction scene and ends with a decapitation by surgical hacksaw. And it carries on that way, never letting up for a minute as we head back to the shores of Camp Crystal Lake.



Joseph Zito is the man responsible for making this latest demented re-read less of a chore to sit through than anticipated. But then his last film, *Rosemary's Killer*, was a good textbook example of this sub-genre.

Let's make no mistake about it, *The Final Chapter* is very definitely formulaised, money-making trash. And yet, as strange as it may sound to the jaded amongst you, it still manages to shock and create a very tense atmosphere prior to each victim's demise. This could be due to the pacing, Manfredini's repetitive music, or the sub-

liminal "Kill. Kill. Kill." on the soundtrack. Whatever, it is a quality that cannot be ignored and must be rooted in the fact that the original *Friday the 13th* in retrospect was a milestone in tapping previously dormant insecurities. *The Final Chapter* has the added bonus of providing a truly nightmarish climax that is by far the best facet of any of the sequels to date.

But *The Final Chapter?* For Jason, perhaps. But as the ending leaves the way open for a new villain to emerge, don't be surprised to learn that production has already begun on *Part 5*.

Starring: Crispin Glover (as Jimmy), Kimberley Beck (*Trish*), Barbara Howard (*Sara*), E. Eich Anderson (*Rob*), Corey Feldman (*Tommy*), Allen Hayes (*Paul*), Judie Aronson (*Samantha*), Ted White (*Jason*), Lawrence Monoson (*Ted*), Joan Freeman (*Mrs Jarvis*), Peter Berton (*Doug*), Camilla More (*Tina*), Carey More (*Terri*), Lisa Freeman (*Nurse Morgan*), Bruce Mahier (*Axel*).

Directed by Joseph Zito. Screenplay by Barney Cohen. Photographed by Jose Fernandes. Edited by Joel Goodman. Special make-up effects by Tom Savini. Produced by Fred Mancuso Jr. Time: 91 mins. Cert: 18



BLIND DATE

"Give this one a miss, unless you're a completist."

A Starburst Film Review
by John Brosnan

Trying to understand the plot of *Blind Date* is like trying to find out on an ice cube under a hot water tap: just when you think you're getting a grip on it you find there's nothing in your hand.

Okay, *Blind Date* is partly about this guy who goes blind after hitting his head on a tree branch while doing a peeping tom act on a girl who reminds him of an old girlfriend of his who got raped and badly beaten up (whether or not it's the same girl isn't clear). But after Keir Dullea, doing a brief cameo as a Dr Steiger, fits him up with what appears to be an ordinary Sony Walkman, which plugs directly into his brain, he is able to see again. Well, sort of. What he sees is what you would expect to see on your TV set after the antenna had been struck by lightning but he gets by okay with this. The device gives him acute hearing as well but don't ask me why as the gizmo, according to Doc Dullea, is plugged into the 'vision centre' of the guy's brain...

Blind Date is also about this mad killer who goes around tying up women, donning a pair of surgical gloves, drawing lines on their bodies and then slicing them up with a scalpel (we are mercifully spared the actual vivisections). He turns out to be both a fake doctor and a fake taxi driver (no, I



haven't given away the ending) which leaves one wondering how he can afford the expensive life-style we see him enjoying during the movie.

There is a link between our blind hero and the mad killer but the logic behind it is so tortuous and unconvincing that only the script writers could possibly accept it. And if I tell you that part of the hero's method for uncovering the villain's identity involves connecting his brain up directly with a TV video game, then you'll get some idea of the sort of movie we're dealing with here.

All this rubbish takes place in Athens; an Athens which seems entirely populated by either American or British actors. Even the three rockers

who beat up our hero in an Athens railway station appear to have come straight from London. The Greek director, Nico Mastorakis, was obviously aiming for the international market but as usual when film makers try too hard at that the result is a movie that lacks character and any sense of time or place. The dialogue is especially awful and one feels embarrassed on behalf of the cast who have to utter the ridiculous lines with straight faces. I particularly felt sorry for Kirstie Alley, the hero's secretary, who is made to look pretty silly by both the script and the director (Ms Alley sure has had luck with her movies; her first one was *Star Trek II*). In fact, the director treats all the

women in the film rather badly—he is sexist in a way that perhaps only a male Greek film maker could possibly manage these days.

Better give this one a miss unless you're a completist when it comes to collecting tacky movies, because this is tack with a capital 'T'.

Starring: Joseph Bottoms (as Jonathan Ratcliff), Kirstie Alley (Claire Simpson), James Daughton (Dave), Lana Clarkson (Rachel), Keir Dullea (Dr Steiger), Charles Nicklin (Robert).

Directed by Nico Mastorakis. Screenplay by Nico Mastorakis and Fred C. Perry. Conceived by Nico Mastorakis. Music by Stanley Myers. Special Digital Effects by Phil Stone. Executive producer Dimitri T. Skouras.

Time: 100 mins Cert: (R)

CHILDREN OF THE CORN

"For all the movie's strong points, there are some equally stupid ones."

A Starburst Film Review
by Alan Jones

After having been disappointed by literally every Stephen King adaptation to make it to the big screen apart from *Carrie*, I find I can't say that about *Children of the Corn*. It is by no means a perfect picture but for once King has been treated with the generic trashiness that I feel his stories deserve. This is a much more honest approach to take rather than inflating their deficiencies with big budgets.

Based on the short story in "Night-shift", *Children of the Corn* concerns the reign of pagan religious terror wielded by a 12-year-old preacher in

the town of Gatlin, Nebraska, that traps two travellers who mistakenly believe they have killed an already sacrificed native in a car accident. When they discover the sinister truth, they put themselves at incredible risk from "He who walks behind the rows". No, not the usher in the cinema—the entity that embodies the evil craving of the corn-fields for blood!

Newcomer Fritz Kiersch has a good visual style and directs surprisingly well considering the somewhat unremarkable material and budget limitations. But for all the movie's strong points there are some equally stupid ones. An atmospheric opening shot depicting the rebellious children massacring their parents in a café sets the film, on the right course, fashioning scares out of flashing knives and faces being jammed into the bacon slicer. The serviceable performances from all concerned don't hurt much either although I would have preferred a lot more menace from the children especially the ring leader, Isaac. That would have elevated the theme of the story to much more than a childish prank and

would have truly made *Children of the Corn* the adult nightmare promised by the poster. Tepid special effects and a really jarring twist ending go somewhat to ruin one's generally positive feelings for the overall film. But then

the score and various individual moments like the roadside nightmare and the cornrows actually coming alive, do tend to make you shake off such forgettable lines as, "Things just aren't happening fast enough".



Barry Forshaw, the man for whom no video experience is too terrible, risks his very sanity for the benefit of *Starburst* readers in his never-ending quest to find watchable films on tape.

It's Golden Turkey time again - I'm sure the massive Arnold Schwarzenegger would be bewildered by his *Conan* sword if he knew that *Replay* had issued his early Tyro effort *Hercules in New York*. This really is appalling stuff, worth watching for only two reasons: (1) Schwarzenegger's physique (if you find it aesthetic!) and (2) the cringing attempts at self-conscious humour - about as successful as *Wild Women of Wongo*. The kind of film where Zeus is pronounced "Zoose", Arthur A Seidelman directs (at a snail's pace) an asinine tale of Hercules leaving Mount Olympus (shown as a kind of Holiday Camp Ornamental Garden) for the dubious delights of modern day N.Y. There's a "cute" mortal helper for Herc, played by Arnold Stang; Schwarzenegger's then thick Austrian accent had to be dubbed (crassly, of course). So, to those of you with an interest in the Musclemen of Mythology I can only say - stick with Steve Reeves!

BLOODY MESS

Occasionally, in the pages of this learned journal, Alan Jones will match John Brosnan's spleen in decimating some quivering director's effort. And Jess (or Jesus) Franco's *Bloody Moon* (now on Intervention, but you may have to search for it - you can guess why!) invited splenetic wrath some time ago - not so much for its violence (Mr Jones, like this reviewer, long being hardened against all but the excesses of *The Dukes of Hazzard*) as its total ineptitude. And one does wonder how a director can make quite so many films and glean so little technique.

UNFAIR DISMISSAL

But, after two such dismissive reviews (in case you're starting to think the video scene is a new version of Eliot's *Waste Land*) let's give some restrained applause to Oliver Stone's *The Hand* (Warner) - even though it doesn't quite make it, it's an ambitious failure which attempts something more than the scantily clad co-eds/masked slasher syndrome. Like his earlier (and equally mis-firingly ambitious) *Seizure*, Stone at least attempts to bring his characters to some kind of realised life - here, a comic-strip artist (winningly played by Michael Caine) who refuses to come to terms with the growing individuality of his wife (who is rapidly adopting a trendy life-style of yoga, consciousness-raising and vegetarianism). The eponymous hand functions successfully as a symbol for the growing paranoia of the artist, but is less effective on the level of horrific thrills - and despite Stone's stress on the psychological

Video FILE

Tape Reviews by
Barry Forshaw



A spooktacular spectre from George Romero's *Creepshow* (Intervention).

WE KID YOU NOT

CREEPSHOW



starburst's
at-a-glance listing of
what's hot and
what's not in the
merry world of video
rental... trust us!



HITS

1. *Shivers* (Intervention)
2. *The Ultimate Warrior* (Warner)
3. *Creepshow* (Intervention)
4. *Superman III* (Thorn/EMI)
5. *Obsession* (RCA)

PITS

1. *My Grave Open* (Olympus)
2. *The Werewolf and the Yeti* (UDF)
3. *Invasion of the Lost God* (A1 Video)
4. *Christmas Evil* (Ivor)
5. *The Bog* (HVS)

aspects of his story, this failure is disheartening. (There is, however, a stunningly effective score by Jerry Goldsmith's heir apparent, James Horner - as well as a clever use of location shooting) So - you may wonder why I'm going out of my way to find good things to say about *The Hand*? Well, mainly because it's received such a bad press - not least in this magazine. In *Starburst* 38, Bill Warren pilloried it for several reasons - the hand "turning out to be only a figment of (Caine's) imagination" (It isn't!); the accident in which Caine's hand is lost being "clumsily staged and difficult to follow," (again, it isn't either of these!); shots from the point of view of the hand are ridiculed ("it grew eyes?") - but such a convention is perfectly acceptable in a supernatural context: after all, if we're talking about crawling, disembodied hands...)

Anyway, enough column space on this one - on to a film that actually comes up with some new ideas for the horror genre:

HANGING ON

Ironically *Sole Survivor* (Intervention) is, like *The Hand*, not wholly successful in realising its ambitions. But again, the characters have individual life, and the plot (which it would be churlish to reveal!) is unhackneyed. Thom Eberhardt's film falls into the category best described as "rent if your video shop is out of your first choice!"

MUDDLED NEGATIVE

From the enterprising VTC comes a curiosity called *Double Negative*, directed by George Bloomfield (from a novel by Ross MacDonald). This convoluted thriller is not without its merits (not least some clever dialogue and well observed performances by, among others, Anthony Perkins.)

The trouble is, Bloomfield has not learned from the brilliant *Point Blank* that an oblique, difficult narrative can be gripping (even if one is only gradually aware of what's going on) - here the effect is wearisomely muddlesome.

WHITE DOG

Samuel Fuller's *White Dog* (CIC), which is appearing on video simultaneously with its cinema release, is a powerful tale told in the director's customarily terse and journalistic style. A killer dog trained by an elderly white racist to attack blacks is adopted by a young actress (Kirsty McNichol) and Fuller brilliantly details her fight to save the dog from its sinister conditioning. Needless to say, all does not go well...

SPRITELY SHOCKER

Atlantis Video seem to have acquired the knack of picking winners - recently, the lively *One Dark Night*, and now the Australian shocker *Next of Kin* (directed by Tony Williams). Getting

the standard caveat out of the way first (rudimentary character development, from heroine – Jackie Kerin – to supporting roles), a slowish start develops into an assured re-working of a *Diaboliques* – type of plot. Linda (Kerin) inherits a sinister old peoples' home from her dead mother, and macabre developments quickly ensue – such as an elderly man stepping into his bath only to find his foot on the distended face of a submerged corpse). camerawork of some invention keeps things cooking till a pulse-thudding finale, satisfactorily carnage-laced.

JAMIE LEE DOWN-UNDER

Roadgames (Embassy) is director Richard Franklin's dry run for *Psycho II* and is a stylish cross-breeding of *Rear Window* and *Duel*. But while Franklin makes some sound attempts at broadening out his truck-driver hero (nicely played by Stacy Keach) – endlessly talking to himself, quoting poetry and displaying that "driving a truck doesn't make me a truck driver" – this refreshing touch is compromised by Franklin's lack of realisation that Hitchcock always made his villains interesting – in the case of films like *Strangers on a Train*, the hero's Strangler alter-ego is far more fascinating than a rather dull hero. Here, however, it's the psycho who is dull and ill-defined – the otherwise splendid climax has none of the moral queasiness that Franklin's monster always imported. And heroine Jamie Lee Curtis is always watchable.

WITHOUT TEETH

While you'll often find me agreeing with earlier *Starburst* reviews of certain films by Alan Jones (as he reviews press showings before I cover the videos) I have to part company with him in his liking for *Big Meat Eater* (Palace Video).

The problem with Chris Windsor's self-conscious attempt at creating a bad SF horror movie is that the real Golden Turkey's (*Plan Nine, Teenagers from Outer Space* etc.) are made in all seriousness by their creators as the best they can do – and their lamentable failure to match their aspirations results in their hilarity value. But when director, actors and technicians are all in the joke with the audience, the genuine naivety is totally missing – and the result here (despite nice touches such as the toy robot aliens) I found only fitfully amusing for that reason.

FUN WITH TOBE

The Funhouse (CIC Video) proves conclusively – if there were still any doubt – that Tobe Hooper's erratic, bizarre imagination is one of the most exhilarating in horror films. Further, it maintains his insistence on the relentless building of tension, rather than a re-

liance on simple grisly shocks. This has remained constant from the marvelously sustained menace of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* through the underrated *Salem's Lot* (the uncertain pedigree of *Polyester* makes that a special case). Here, the disturbing fair-ground mannikins behind the credits hint at the uneasy imagery that proliferates in the succeeding film, and one forgives the rudimentary characterisations of the standard teenagers in jeopardy – for the lethal Funhouse they are trapped in gives full rein to Hooper's penchant for creating monstrous "families" (here the carnival father's lament over the murderous excesses of his mutant son is given far more force than anything involving the conventional principles; a power struggle between the two male teenagers goes

for nothing, reminding one that Hooper tried a little harder with the whining Franklin in TCM).

But it's the shocks that count – and they really are nicely judged here. The borders of the frame become minefields of leaping menace from which the grotesque killer (an excellent performance by Wayne Doba) may jerk at any second – and the final confrontation in the throbbing hissing "nervous-centre" of the fun-house generates all the channel-house terror of Hooper's debut film. A word about video viewing of this film – turning up the volume (or better yet, connecting the audio socket to your Hi-fi) will aid immensely, in maximising the Dolby-aided aural shocks of *The Funhouse*. A tv viewing is very much second best to a cinema experience of the film, and anything



Above: Dee Wallace takes aim, not at E.T. but Cujo, the latest shaggy dog story released from Guild. Below: Stacy Keach and Jamie Lee Curtis from *Road Games* (Embassy) directed by Richard Franklin.



that can re-create that auditorium atmosphere

NEW AND FORTHCOMING

From Guild: Arturian fantasy with *Merlin and the Sword and Cupo*; MGM has the witty and quirky *Travelling Executioner* and the much-awaited *Brainstorm*; Embassy are issuing the spool *Saturday the 14th*, while Prestige has the 3-D *The Mask*. Thorn EMI has *Double Exposure* and *Derann Craved and Frankenstein's Island*.

BRIEF NOTES

capsule comments by starburst video reviewer barry forshaw.

He Knows You're Alone (MGM) is the most bloodless of the Stalk'n'Slash idiom in every sense of the word: Armand Mastroianni rips off *Halloween* (even Carpenter's score!), *Psycho* (even Herrmann's score!), and has fabricated a lack-lustre juggling of one-dimensional victims and killers.

Any film that prominently plugs Starburst has its heart in the right place – and David Winter's *The Last Horror Film* (Intervision) has Joe Spinell (re-treading his *Maniac* persona in pursuit of the defunctable Caroline Munro) as a fan of this august journal. Heart is also bloodily evidenced, but the balance of comic and horror elements is nervous.

One of the reasons that *Carrie* (Intervision) remains one of Brian De Palma's finest films is the clever growth of horror elements out of brilliantly sketched characters – Carrie (beautifully played by Sissy Spacek) with her humiliations, moments of glory and final telekinetic revenge, is a character about whom De Palma makes us care – and the superb performances of the rest of the cast sweep aside minor objections.

CIC's issue of *The Sentinel* (from Jeffrey Konvitz's *Romero's Baby*-like novel) rather proves that Michael Winner (after the flat *The Witches*) has lost feel for the horror genre. But as Dick Smith was responsible for the special effects, including the knife-gashing of an appendage that had cinema audiences gasping! there's at least one persuasive reason for renting the video.

George Romero's *Martin* (Hello Video) is really too good for its name – the more intimate horror film's repression required far better actors than Romero was able to afford, and the story of a young, one-day vampire is less than to Martin's tale, with setting that the members of *A Night of the Living Dead* are worth coming for (romantic reasons).

A backlog of titles this month, so I'll get straight on with it. From Corgi comes *Mockingbird* by Walter Tevis at £2.50, the story of the android, Spofforth, in a future Earth where humans have abandoned themselves to the guardianship of ageing machines. Strict rules relating to person privacy have been instilled into the population and ensure a minimum of human intimacy in order to discourage the competitiveness and aggression which have caused so many upheavals in the past. But the birth-rate is declining, people are still unhappy and many commit suicide. Spofforth also wishes to kill himself, but he is prevented from jumping from the top of the Empire State Building by a self-protective mechanism programmed into him.

Enter Bentley, a human who has rediscovered the forgotten art of reading and whom Spofforth takes under his tutelage. Bentley also meets up with Mary Lou, and the two reject all the conventions of the day, giving up drugs and cohabiting with one another. Then Spofforth has Bentley jailed and tries to take his place in Mary Lou's life. But Bentley escapes and discovers that Spofforth is actually responsible for the declining birth-rate by feeding anti-fertility drugs to everyone in the hope of extinguishing the human race: only when everyone is dead will he be able to end his own existence. But Bentley persuades Spofforth to stop all issues of drugs to the remaining populace. He and Mary Lou then fulfill the android's most earnest wish by pushing him off the top of the Empire State Building to his death.

Mockingbird is not a perfect novel by any means, some of its set-pieces being too studiously crafted and the book overall having the feel of being more a literary artifact than a living work-of-art. But it is an ambitious undertaking which addresses itself to important issues with as much artistry as the author can muster. Its message that free will and passion are essential for anyone to be fully human is persuasively argued, and the book has some of that authentic sense of wonder which the best SF is supposed to evoke.

Arcade by Robert Maxxe (Pan, £1.95) is about sinister doings in a Long Island resort, where a new video games' arcade opens which exerts an unhealthy attraction for the children of the town. A concerned mother decides to investigate the arcade with the help of her computer specialist boyfriend, and they eventually discover that the technology behind the machines is beyond that of present-day science. Are the children's minds about to be taken over by some malevolent alien presence? Well, not exactly, the purpose of the machines being an educative one to prepare the world for the eventual coming of the aliens. *Arcade* might have been a gripping enough techno-

BOOK WORLD

by Chris Charles



A scene from Nicolas Roeg's *The Man Who Fell To Earth* based on the novel by Walter Tevis, whose latest is *Mockingbird*.



thriller, but the writing is pedestrian and the story never really gets moving. Robert Maxxe is apparently the pseudonym of a well-known American author, but he's put little effort or passion into this offering.

Much more interesting is *Geta* by Donald Kingsbury (Granada, 12.50), a

novel rich in texture and detail. On the planet Geta various human tribes live in extended families of up to six husbands and wives. Cannibalism is common, babies or old people being killed and eaten during times of famine. The plot involves a courtship rite by a family of five who have to marry

another woman from outside the tribe, but the main aim of the novel is a detailed portrait of a human culture unlike any known on Earth; and in this it succeeds admirably. Some of the Getas' practices, the most obvious being cannibalism, are repellent to us but are described from the perspective of the Getas in a matter-of-fact manner which effectively conveys the alienness of their society. The characterization is strong, and the book is rare in science fiction in that it contains no obvious heroes and villains, merely people in conflict with one another. The main drawback is that it takes the reader some time to adjust to the world and its large cast of characters so that the novel is a slow read. But the text repays the effort invested in it, and *Geta* can be recommended as a sustained and mature work of science fiction which bears comparison with such world-building novels as *Dune*.

Larry Niven & Steven Barnes's latest offering is *The Descent of Anansi* (Futura, £1.95). According to the authors "Anansi" is a spider from African legend who crept into Heaven and was evicted, but I kept thinking of it as "A Nancy", which gives the title somewhat unfortunate connotations. The novel itself is routine space technology stuff involving the rescue of a crippled shuttle containing a valuable cargo. I have to declare a bias against this kind of SF, and this particular example offers nothing new. The characters display unusual talents in that on two occasions at least they "barked laughter". I tried this myself, but succeeded only in sounding like a hyena with whooping cough.

From Arrow is a welcome reprint of *Dكتور Mirabilis* by James Blish at £1.95. Though marketed as science fiction, it is in fact a fascinating historical novel about Roger Bacon, the 13th century figure whom Blish presents as the forefather of the modern scientific method. This carefully researched novel is arguably Blish's finest work, and was certainly a long labour of love for him. Bacon was tragically constrained from fulfilling his potential by the religious and political pressures of his age, and the novel has a poignancy which makes it linger long in the mind.

Finally JM Dent have produced a second attractive reprint of J.G. Ballard's work at £2.95. *The Terminal Beach* collects some of Ballard's earliest and most potent short stories, though I have to admit the heresy that reading a clutch of them at a time tends rapidly to sate the appetite. Ballard's prose has distinctive cadences which can become repetitive, and a plethora of similes tend to over-ornament some of the stories here. Nevertheless he's a genuine original who can lull the reader into accepting the most preposterous of notions for the duration of a story. A book to be sampled at intervals for its tasty morsels rather than swallowed whole at one sitting.

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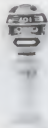
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Hey! Glad you could make it this month. Where to start? I'm sure you're all dying to know the results of the Mystery Still Competition which I sprang on you unsuspecting Starbursters amidst the *Data Bank* column in SB69. You want to know who won and whether you are the fortunate person who has copped a freebie, right? Okay, I shuffled through the mountain of entries (actually 53 – poor show, troops!) and decided that in addition to the traditional, first-out-of-the-hat correct entry, I would also award a prize to the know-it-all of the month who sent in the most detailed answer. First, the winning one-word postcard came from... Ian R. Kerr of Fleetwood in Lancashire (calm down, Ian, it's only a movie poster!). The smart-alec entry came from Mark Pearce from Littleover (ahem!), Derby who told me, knowingly, "The still in question is taken from the film *Them!* with Sgt Ben Peterson (James Whitmore) and sidekick Ed Blackburn, viewing the remains of the trailer, ripped open from the outside (not, incidentally, smashed open from the inside as stated in *Starburst* 68). Hope I win!" More front than Sainsbury's, Mark. Both Ian and Mark will have received their movie posters before the rest of you read this, so it's too late to lodge an objection. Now to the nitty-gritty for this month.

"I TALK TO THE TREES..."

First up, this month, a heartfelt plea from Gary O'Brien of Bushey, Herts. He wants to know whether there is a talking tree (!) in Steven Spielberg's movie, *E.T. A.H.* right, Gary? "As the film opens," continues Gary, "we see the little aliens outside their spaceship. Then, just before the owl hoots and the aliens freeze in shock, the camera pans from left to right past a tree in the foreground. Now this tree has eyes and a mouth and it mumbles something. Believe me! If you could confirm this, I'd be grateful, if not then I must be cracking up." Have you told your analyst this story, Gary? Could be that your pirate copy of the film has a shifting picture that makes the tree look alive. Either way, I've never noticed it when I've seen the movie at the cinema. Can anybody else shed any light on this?

HERO SANDWICH

Carlton Thomas from Edinburgh asks, "I've read in several interviews that George Lucas and George Miller were both inspired in their film making by a book called *The Hero of a Thousand Faces*. I've asked in my local Smiths, but they've never heard of it. Does it really exist?"

It sure does, Carl. But it's actually called *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* and was written by Joseph Campbell as early as 1949. It's a heavyweight psychological tome that

Starburst DATA BANK

Information from the filing
cabinet of Dr Sally Gary



Above: An uncharacteristic pose for Peter Lorre in this publicity shot with Frances Drake for *Mad Love* (1935). Below: The hairless Lorre in a scene from the same film.



takes for its premise: "Despite their infinite variety of incident, setting and costume, the myths of the world offer only a limited number of responses to the riddle of life." But wait! It's actually a fascinating book devoted to the idea of The Universal Hero and how such a composite figure has turned up in various forms, whether it be in Ancient Greece, the folklore of various countries and so on. All this is tied in with Jungian and Freudian theories in Mr Campbell's hypothesis. It's certainly worth wading through if you feel like applying it to such "heroes" as Mad Max and Luke Skywalker, although don't under any circumstances expect to find references to these folks by name. You should be able to order it through Dillon's University Bookshop in London. Vital details you'll need are: *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell, published by Princeton University Press (USA) as part of the Princeton/Bollingen Paperbacks series and the ISBN number is 0-691-01784-0.

MEET LAZLO LÖWENSTEIN

Mary-Anne Cross of Beaconsfield shows she's a lady of taste when she writes, "Mel Gibson may be a hunk, but my favourite fantasy actor has always been little Peter Lorre. How about some background information and a couple of those glossy style '30s portraits?"

Often confusingly referred to as a German, Peter was actually born in Rosenberg, Hungary on June 26th 1904 and his real name was Laszlo Löwenstein. A boring early career working as a bank teller led him to the stage and after studying the craft in Vienna he hit the boards in Zurich, Switzerland. He ended up in Germany in the late 20s where he managed to get a few small parts in movies. It was here that he was "discovered" by Fritz Lang (already with several great films behind him including *Metropolis*, *Woman in the Moon* and the epic *Dr Mabuse*) and starred in the famous and still thoroughly wonderful *M*, in which he played a psychopathic child murderer who is finally hunted down by the underworld when the local law fail to do the job. The following year he turned up in one of the first German SF talkies, *F.P. I Does Not Answer* (the F.P. standing for "Floating Platform", in case you were curious). But with the rise of Hitler and the Nazis, Lorre left the country, working briefly in France and England. Perhaps the best known film from this period is Alfred Hitchcock's first and best version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* in 1934. Peter then made his way to America where he made an incredible impression as the mad doctor (and there's a few of those about!) in Karl Freund's weird *Mad Love* – a remake of a Conrad Veidt silent, *The Hands of Orlac*.

Lorre made a big and popular impression with American audiences through a series of B films playing the Japanese counterpart of Charlie Chan – Mr Moto, who *Thought Fast*, was on *Danger Island*, took a *Vacation*, *Gambled* and even had a *Last Warning* right through the 30s in this often entertaining, and today little seen, series of pulpy potboilers. Usually confined to smallish character parts, Lorre signed with Warners and had some striking scenes and characterisations in such films as *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) *Casablanca* (1942) *Passage to Marseille* and *The Mask of Demetrius* (both 1946). Throughout his career he appeared in some interesting, if not wholly successful fantasy features. *The Stranger on the Third Floor* (1940) contained a marvellous and extended dream sequence while the rest of the picture just doesn't rate; *The Face Behind the Mask* (1941) featured the actor as a horribly scarred doctor and in 1946 he starred in the Robert Florey-directed *The Beast With 5 Fingers* perhaps the most famous of the wandering hand horrors. In 1951, Lorre returned to Germany where he wrote, directed and starred in *Der Verlorene* (*The Lost One*) a highly regarded film which harks back (at least stylistically) to the great days of German Expressionist cinema.

Back in America Lorre turned up in Disney's superior 20,000 *Leagues Under the Sea* (1954) *Around the World in 80 Days* (1956) and fiddled as Rome brought (courtesy of a wheller of stock footage) as Nero in the appalling Irwin Allen tuff-futi *The Story of Mankind* (1957). He also had the dubious honour of appearing in the first film in Smell-O-Vision, *Scent of Mystery* in 1960 and the following year was one of the passengers on Admiral Nelson's submarine Seaview in Irwin Allen's *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*. In 1962 he played an amusing role in Corman's well balanced horror/comedy blend, *Tales of Terror* and the following year starred alongside Karlhoff and Vincent Price in the Richard Matheson scribed and Corman-directed *The Raven*. With all three thesp's obviously enjoying themselves they reteamed (along with Basil "What place is this?" Rathbone) in Jacques Tourneur's engaging horror farce, *The Comedy of Terrors* (1963). Just prior to Peter Lorre's death in 1964, he cameled in *Muscle Beach Party* and Jerry Lewis' *The Patsy*. If you want to know more about Peter Lorre, Mary, then you'll find a chapter on him in Calvin Beck's *Heroes of the Horrors* (published by Macmillan some years ago but still available) and a whole book on the manic cherub, *The Films of Peter Lorre* from Citadel Press.

SCHUFFTAN EFFECT

One of those questions I've long been dreading has finally turned up! T.K.



Hey good Looker Playboy Playmate of the Year Teri Welles making her film debut as a glamorous high-fashion model in Michael Crichton's fantasy flop (now available on video).

Smith of Plymouth writes, "Dear Sally, Can you please explain in common terminology exactly what the Schufftan Process is?"

This question I nearly decided to lose, but I'll give it a try. But first a little about the man who invented it. Eugen Schufftan was born in Breslau, Germany on July 21, 1893. Before becoming involved in the world of movies in the late 20s he worked as an artist, architect, sculptor and designer. Like so many, including Peter Lorre and Fritz Lang, he fled Germany when the Nazis came to power and before settling in America (where he changed his name to Eugene Shuftan) he worked in France, most notably with Marcel Carne, until the late 40s. His American credits are generally unremarkable with the exception of his brooding black and white photography for the Paul Newman starrer *The Hustler* (1961). He was responsible for the special photographic effects in Byron Haskin's 1963 oddball *Captain Sinbad* which starred Guy (Zorro and *Lost in Space*) Williams. Perhaps Schufftan's



greatest contribution to fantasy cinema (outside of *Metropolis* which we'll get to in a moment) is his cinematography for the Georges Franju classic *The Eyes Without a Face* in 1959, a film which successfully combined low key atmospheric and sequences of (for the time) graphic gore in a genuinely disturbing way. Schufftan died in 1970.

And so to the "process" Basically, and as simply as possible (as per your request T.K.), the Schufftan Process is a system which enables the in-camera compositing of miniature sets and backgrounds with full scale, live action foregrounds. This is achieved by placing a mirror at a 45 degree angle to the axis of the camera lens. The miniature set or background is then placed in such a way that it is reflected in the mirror and can be reflected by the camera. To capture the live action section of the shot, the silvered surface of the mirror is scraped clean allowing the camera to shoot through it. Needless to say (though I will anyway!) the process requires careful calculations and in many ways is quite limited (no camera movement for example) in its applications – in much the same way as the glass shot is. Schufftan used the effect successfully in Lang's *Metropolis*, creating giant panoramas for the futuristic cityscapes. The process was sort lived however with the general introduction of the matte process and later the travelling matte. Got it now, T.K? Good. Next!

ANOTHER WRITING DOCTOR

Danny Post from Cheshire writes asking for information on writer and director Michael Crichton.

Certainly, Dan Crichton is one of the more interesting talents in films even if his projects are often few and far between. Born in 1942 in Chicago, Crichton was brought up in New York and is a Harvard graduate. He went on to study medicine and by the time he received his M.D. he'd also published a string of reasonably good thrillers, writing under the pseudonym of John Lange. In later years he would continue to write under other names including Michael Douglas (wonder what the actor Michael Douglas thinks of that?) and Jeffrey Hudson as well as scoring highly under his own moniker. His first

success as M.C. was *The Andromeda Strain* which was filmed under Robert Wise's direction in 1971. Another thriller (with a medical background) was made from one of his pen-named novels, *The Carey Treatment* (the book was called *A Case of Need*) with James Coburn and directed by Blake Edwards. Medicine and science are elements that Crichton often features in his stories and screenplays. *Binary* (1972), based on one of his "John Lange" potboilers, marked Crichton's debut as a director in an above-average TV-movie and the following year he really scored a hit with *Westworld* then ailing MGM. The movie now rates as something of a classic with SF fans and showed that Crichton was a director with a strong if simple visual sense. It even rated a sequel, *Futureworld*, which starred Peter Fonda and Blythe Danner but apart from a clever premise it remains pretty unmemorable – probably because Crichton had nothing to do with it. A superior novel *The Terminal Man* was turned into less than a superior movie by director Mike Hodges. The story of an unbalanced man who has a brain implant which caused stimuli to be received whenever he has violent thoughts, is certainly an interesting idea, but the mis-casting of George Segal in the title role sunk the movie almost without a trace, although you will find it on video.

1978 saw Crichton's biggest success, *Coma*, released. Starring Genevieve Bujold (Mrs Crichton when I last heard) *Coma* was an all-stops-out scientific thriller about a mysterious black market operation in human spare parts. Slickly written and directed by Crichton, the film proved an enormous hit prompted in part by the runaway success of its novel origin by another doctor (talented lot, aren't we?) Robin Cook. Crichton's next novel (and the movie version) was a resounding flop however. *The Great Train Robbery* with Donald Sutherland and Michael Caine was a lumbering period piece which opened and closed in most cinemas within a couple of weeks. Similarly, the movie *Looker*, written and directed by Crichton was not a great winner with cinema audiences, and though available now in Britain on video, the film never did achieve a theatrical release and sat on Warner Brothers shelf for two years.

Since then Michael Crichton has written another best-seller called *Condo*, a blend of science and old-fashioned jungle adventure whose leading character is a super intelligent ape named Amy. A film version has been in an on/off state for a couple or more years with both Crichton and Brian DePalma being slated to direct. Hope this helps a little, Dan.

Keep those questions rolling in folks. Any question relating to any aspect of what you find in *Starburst* will do. And remember there's a cheap prize to be won for the best question each Data bank. How could you forget ... ?

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says columnist Sally Gary.



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